MINARI ENDO

14

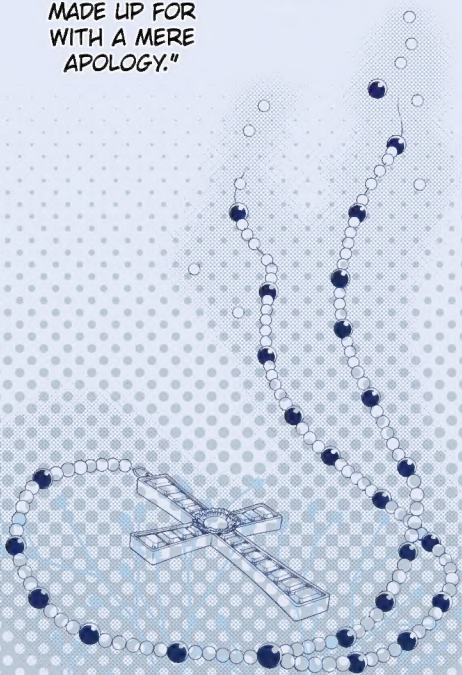
MARIA†HOLIC

SO YOU'RE ON A MISSION TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT MARIYA?
THEN ALLOW ME, MIYAMAE KANAKO, TO ASSIST YOU.

Prayer79
Find Out Shidou Mariya's Secret! Part ②

"KANAKO-SAMA, ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'LL LEARN..."

"...THAT SOME TYPES OF MISCHIEF CAN'T BE MADE UP FOR WITH A MERE APOLOGY."



MARIA HOLIC

MARIA HOLIC 14

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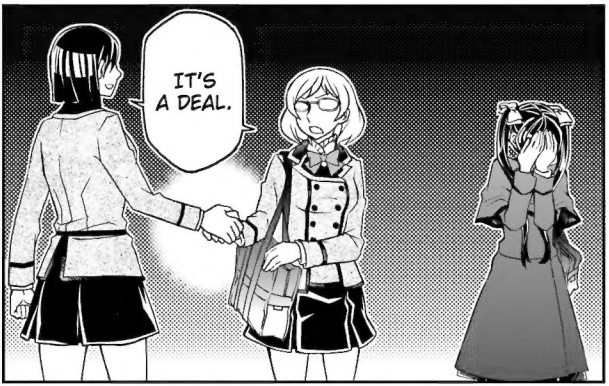
MARIA HOLIC

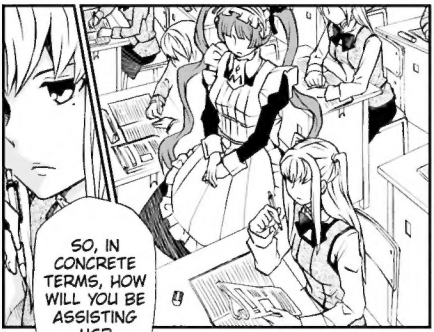
TWEET TWEET TWEET
CHEEP CHEEP
TWEET TWEET TWEET
MMMF...
THE TWITTERING OF THE BIRDS IS SO REFRESHING.
WHAT A GREAT WAY TO WAKE UP!
HOW LONG ARE YOU GONNA LAZE AROUND IN BED?
I'M LEAVING FOR BREAKFAST.
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, MARIYA-SAN?
SLAM
NO FOOD FOR YOU IF YOU'RE LATE! DORM RULES!
HEH HEH...
YOU'D BEST SAVOR THAT MEAL.
SNEER
'CAUSE IT'S GOING TO BE YOUR LAST MEAL IN GIRLS' DORM NUMBER TWO!

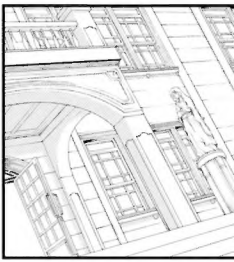
SO YOU'RE ON A MISSION TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT MARIYA?
THEN ALLOW ME, MIYAMAE KANAKO, TO ASSIST YOU.
I CAN STILL MAKE THE BUS.
WAIT, WAIT, WAAAIT!!
I'M NOT SOME SHADY CHARACTER !!
LIKE, I'M NOT TRYING TO PUSH YOU INTO BUYING DETERGENT OR VASES OR ANYTHING, I SWEAR!
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU.
FOR A MESSIAH BRAVE ENOUGH TO EXPOSE SHIDOU MARIYA AND BRING PEACE TO AME NO KISAKI.
I CAN'T COME OUT AND TELL THEM MYSELF THAT MARIYA IS A BOY.
I'LL GET YOU KICKED OUT OF AME NO KISAKI!
BUT WHAT IF I LEAD THEM TO THE TRUTH, AND ULTIMATELY IT LEADS TO MARIYA GETTING EXPELLED...?

BUT I EXPECTED THAT MUCH...!
HEH HEH... A CAUTIOUS LITTLE KITTY, IS SHE?
I'M OFFERING FOR YOU TO USE ME.
I WON'T ASK YOU TO TRUST ME.
AN INFORMANT APPEARING SO SOON AFTER WE MADE DIRECT CONTACT WITH SHIDOU MARIYA...?
THIS TIMING IS HIGHLY SUSPECT.
WHO CAN PROVE THAT YOU'RE NOT WITH THE ENEMY, HMM?
BEFORE LONG, WE'LL BE INSEPARABLE...
BY CONFRONTING A COMMON ENEMY, OUR FRIENDSHIP WILL DEEPEN, AND LOVE WILL BLOSSOM!
THE TWO OF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR THE CLUE THAT WILL LEAD YOU DOWN THE PATH OF TRUTH, AREN'T YOU?
CAN YOU AFFORD TO PASS THIS CHANCE UP?
HMPH...
YOUR LOGIC IS SOUND.
NO. NO, IT'S NOT.

CLASP


IT'S A DEAL.


SO, IN CONCRETE TERMS, HOW WILL YOU BE ASSISTING US?



1-A

HOPEFULLY I CAN B.S. THIS.
OH, SNAP! I HADN'T THOUGHT THIS FAR AHEAD!
AND IT'S NOT THE RIGHT TIME YET.
HEH HEH... DON'T GET GREEDY, NOW.
ALL IN DUE TIME, AS THEY SAY.
IS THIS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO PLAY THE STRAIGHT MAN? HOW CAN ANYONE ACTUALLY LIVE AT AME NO KISAKI AND KEEP THEIR SANITY?
NO. NO, IT'S NOT.
IF IT'S NOT THE RIGHT TIME, THEN LET ME GO HOME!
I SEE. REASONABLE ENOUGH.
YES! IT WORKED! SHE'S DUMBER THAN SHE LOOKS...
-?
WAIT, WHY DO I HAVE TO SKIP CLASSES WITH THEM..!?
OH, GOD. THAT'S IT. TODAY, I CAN EAT THE SPECIAL PUDDING IN THE CAFETERIA...
SHOULDN'T YOU GIRLS BE IN CLASS?
NURSE TOMOMURA!
YOU SKIPPING? MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR YOUTH?

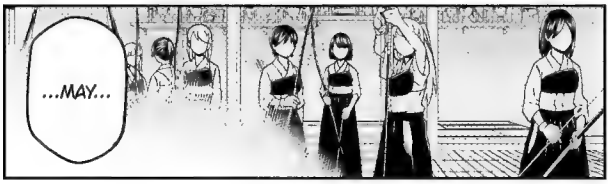
WE HAVE A MISSION OF GREAT IMPORT.
HUH?!
BUT ACTING CARELESSLY COULD PUT YOUR LIFE IN DANGER...
THEREFORE, I CAN'T DIVULGE ANY DETAILS.
...IS THIS THAT DELUSIONAL FANTASIES THING THAT HAPPENS WHEN KIDS HIT PUBERTY?
AND THIS GIRL OVER HERE'S HE LOOKS LIKE THE TYPE WHO REGRETS THAT SHE DIDN'T RUN BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE.
LIKE THE KIND OF KID WHO ENDS UP GETTING STUCK AS A CLASS REPRESENTATIVE OR CLASS HEALTH OFFICER.
I BET SHE'S AN ELDEST DAUGHTER.
SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE HATES HER LIFE.
DO THESE KIDS NEED SOME COUNSELING?
WHY DON'T YOU GIRLS COME DOWN TO THE NURSE'S OFFICE FOR SOME TEA?
THERE'S DORAYAKI PANCAKES.
DON'T NEED TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.
AND MIYAMAE-SAN.

NURSE'S OFFICE
SHE WAS SURPRISINGLY UNDERSTANDING, FOR A TEACHER.
UH-HUH! AND IMPRESSIVE IN OTHER WAYS, TOO!
BOING
THAT WAS A COUNSELING SESSION. DEFINITELY.
SHE KEPT ASKING ABOUT OUR HOME LIVES, AND TRAUMA IN OUR EARLY CHILDHOODS.
SHE WAS SO KIND, TRYING TO UNDERSTAND OUR DELICATE TEENAGE HEARTS.
SHE EVEN OFFERED TO COVER FOR US SKIPPING FIRST PERIOD BY SAYING WE WERE UNDER THE WEATHER. I OWE HER SO BAD.
I HAVE TO REPAY HER KINDNESS BY GOING TO SECOND PERIOD!
BYE! I'M GOING TO CLASS!
AH! WAIT!

TCH
TSK... SHE WIMPED OUT, DID SHE?
I SUPPOSE I CAN'T BLAME HER, GIVEN HOW OVERWHELMINGLY POWERFUL OUR ADVERSARY IS...
YUP, CAN'T BLAME HER! THEY WERE TOTALLY OVERWHELMING!

BE THAT...

...AS IT...


...MAY...

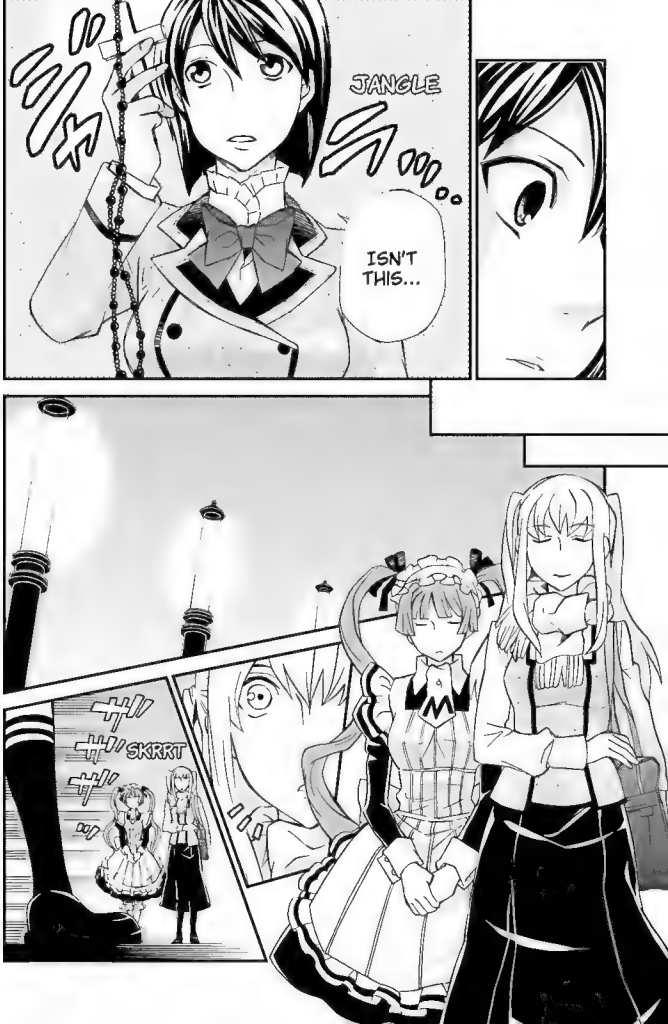
I CAN'T GO SHOOTING MY MOUTH OFF ABOUT MARIYA BEING A CROSS-DRESSING CREEP.
CRAP!
MY ROLE IS ONLY TO GUIDE HER TO THE TRUTH...
I'M SORRY.
I CAN'T SAY ANYTHING MYSELF...
YEAH...
WELL, SHE'S MANAGED TO PRETEND TO BE A NORMAL STUDENT SO FAR.
SHE NEVER LETS HER GUARD DOWN!
AT THIS POINT SHE WOULDN'T GIVE HERSELF AWAY SO EASILY...
"NORMAL STUDENT"?

ARE YOU... ARE YOU BEING BLACK-MAILED?
HRNK!
HOW DEVIANT!!

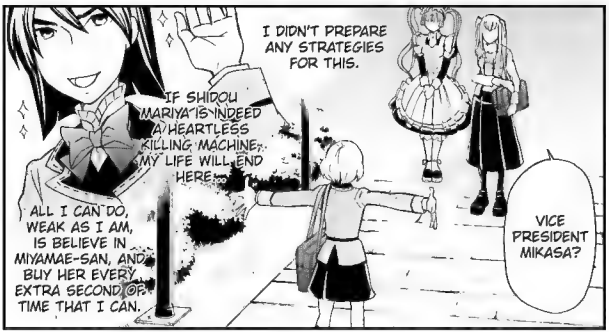
I KNEW IT. SHINDO MARIYA IS A NASA ROBOT...!!
MIYAMAE-SAN'S ATTITUDE... SHE'S IN DEEP, BUT SHE CAN'T REVEAL THE TRUTH!..
GULP

LISTEN. IF SHE WON'T GIVE HERSELF AWAY, WE CAN FORCE THE TRUTH OUT.
HUH?
MIYAMAE-SAN.
THIS IS SOMETHING THAT ONLY YOU CAN DO.
HMM...
IF MARIYA WALKS IN ON THIS, I'M SCREWED...
RUSTLE RUSTLE
CLUNK CLACK

THAT FOUR-EYES, SEDUCING ME WITH HER CUTE LOOKS--THE DEVILISH LITTLE THING!
SHE'S REALLY SOMETHING, TASKING ME WITH SUCH A DANGEROUS MISSION! WHEN SHE'S CONVINCED I'M ALREADY BEING BLACKMAILED!
ポイッ
TOSS
AS SHIDOU-SAN'S ROOMMATE, ONLY YOU CAN DO THIS.
I NEED YOU TO SEARCH THROUGH HER THINGS FOR OIL, BOLTS, ANYTHING RELATED TO MECHANICAL MAINTENANCE.
OIL? BOLTS?
YES.
THAT WILL BE OUR INDISPUTABLE EVIDENCE.
HEH HEH
...THAT SHE'S A ROBOTIC DOLL.
I'LL SLOW HER DOWN.
BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WE'LL RESTORE PEACE TO AME NO KISAKI!
CLATTER
I DON'T REALLY GET HOW MECHANICAL PARTS ARE GONNA PROVE THAT MARIYA IS A CROSS-DRESSER...


JANGLE
ISN'T THIS...
SKRRT

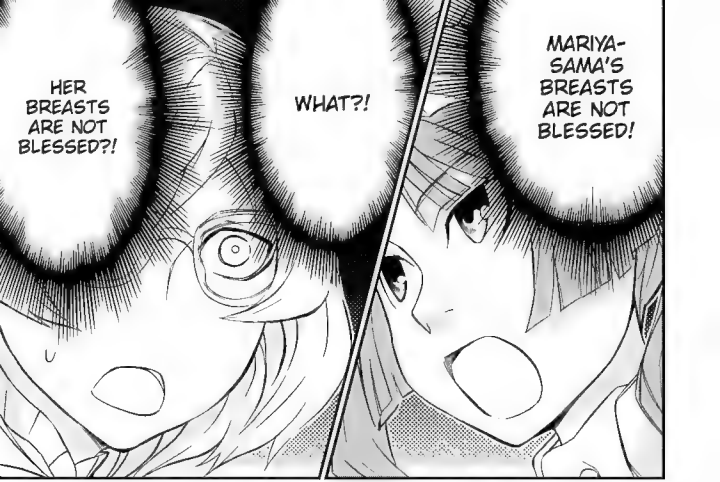
YOU'LL HAVE TO GET THROUGH ME FIRST BEFORE GOING ANY FURTHER!
WHAP


I DIDN'T PREPARE ANY STRATEGIES FOR THIS.
IF SHIDOU MARIYA IS INDEED A HEARTLESS KILLING MACHINE?, MY LIFE WILL END HERE...
ALL I CAN DO, WEAK AS I AM, IS BELIEVE IN MIYAMAE-SAN, AND BUY HER EVERY EXTRA SECOND OF TIME THAT I CAN.
VICE PRESIDENT MIKASA?

SHALL WE TAKE THIS TO THE DORM? WE CAN SIT DOWN AND TALK.
AH!

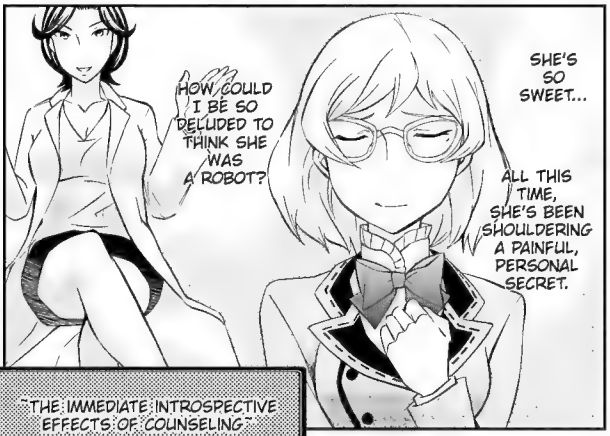
...
I'M READY! DO YOUR WORST!!

NO! I CAN'T LET YOU THROUGH YET!
SLIP
!!
GYAA!!
GRAB
"SLIP"?
...
SNOOP
THE JIG IS UP, IS IT?
SHIDOU-SAN, IS THE POSITION OF YOUR BREASTS A LITTLE OFF?


MARIYA-SAMA'S BREASTS ARE NOT BLESSED!
WHAT?!
HER BREASTS ARE NOT BLESSED?!

AS A DAUGHTER OF THE SHIDOU FAMILY, GREAT RESPONSIBILITY AND EXPECTATIONS FALL ON HER SHOULDERS...
YET SHE WAS CURSED WITH A FLAT CHEST.
A MERE CUP SIZE. YET AN INESCAPABLE CUP SIZE.
IF EVEN BRAS DO NOT NEED HER, WOULD ANYONE NEED HER?
WITH MIXED FEELINGS, SHE HAS LIVED HER LIFE WITH GEL PADS EVER AFFIXED TO HER BREASTLESS-CHEST.
WHOA.
WHOA.
WHOA.

THE SECRET SHE HAS KEPT HIDDEN WITH ALL HER HEART AND SOUL, NOT ONLY FOR THE HONOR OF THE SHIDOU FAMILY, BUT FOR THAT OF AME NO KISAKI ITSELF...
ポロ!!
PLIP
NOW THAT IT'S BEEN EXPOSED, MARIYA-SAMA WILL HAVE TO LEAVE AME NO KISAKI...
SHIDOU-SAN...


SHE'S SO SWEET...
HOW COULD I BE SO DELUDED TO THINK SHE WAS A ROBOT?
ALL THIS TIME, SHE'S BEEN SHOULDERING A PAINFUL, PERSONAL SECRET.
~THE IMMEDIATE INTROSPECTIVE EFFECTS OF COUNSELING~

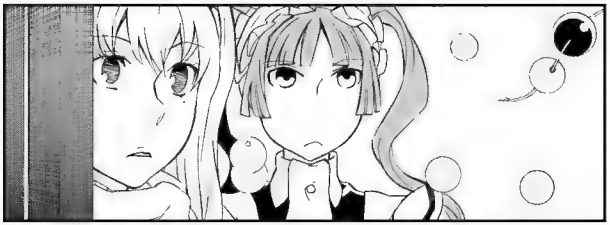
SHINDOU-SAN...
CLASP
YOUR CHEST CAN ONLY GET BIGGER FROM HERE!
THERE'S A GROWTH SPURT WAITING FOR YOU.
I, MIKASA YOSHINO...
...WILL TAKE YOUR SECRET TO MY GRAVE...!!

キラ
GLINT
HMM. THIS ROSARY, MARIYA'S MEMENTO OF HIS GRAND-MOTHER...
IT LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE MY OWN CROSS NECKLACE.
WONDER IF THEY CAME FROM THE SAME STORE?
めっちゃかわいい
IT'S A SUUUPER...
高価なやつだー
...EXPENSIVE PIECE!
HOW COULD YOU KEEP SOMETHING SO EXPENSIVE IN A DESK DRAWER?
BRR. RICH PEOPLE, MAN. THEY TERRIFY ME.

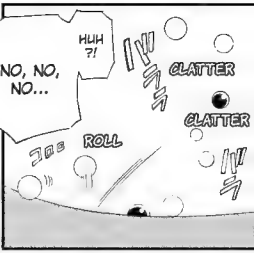
KA-CHAK
OH MY GOSH, WHAT IF MY NECKLACE STARTED OFF AS A SHIDOU FAMILY HEIRLOOM OR SOMETHING?
NO WAY. WHO AM I KIDDING?

THEY'RE BACK ALREADY?!
HUH?! OH. MY. GOD! IS THAT MARIYA?!

SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BUY ME TIME-
SNAP



THIS SERIOUSLY CAN'T BE HAPPENING!

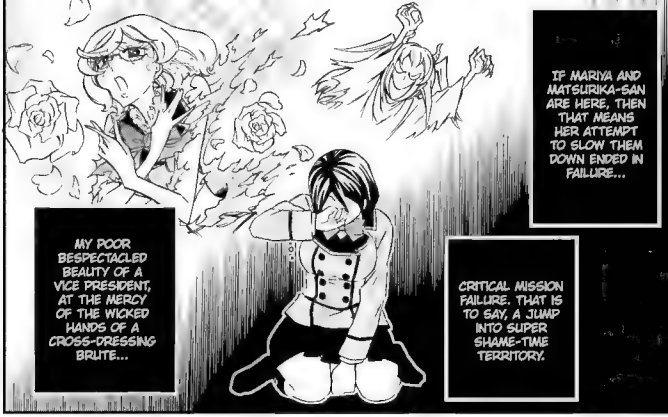

NO, NO, NO...
HUH ?!
CLATTER
CLATTER
ROLL

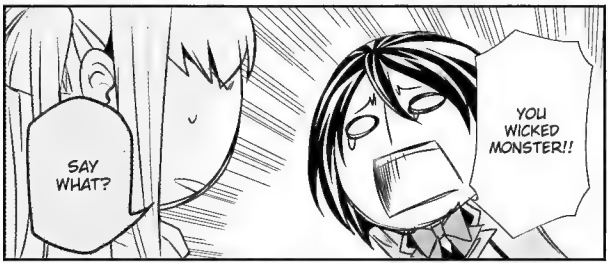
I'VE DONE IT NOW!!!

Prayer80
Find Out Shidou Mariya's Secret! Part ③

OH. MY. GOD! MARIYA'S BACK ALREADY?!
SNAP
SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BUY ME TIME–
GEH!!
NO, NO, NO!
THIS SERIOUSLY CAN'T BE HAPPENING!
JOLT

TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
CRUD!!
GOTTA FUDGE MY WAY THROUGH THIS...
...UHH... THIS ISN'T WHAT IT...
MIKASA-SAN TOLD ME TO, UH...
IT WAS AN UNLUCKY ACCIDENT...
WAIT! WHAT HAPPENED TO MIKASA-SAN?!
GASP


IF MARIYA AND MATSURIKA-SAN ARE HERE, THEN THAT MEANS HER ATTEMPT TO SLOW THEM DOWN ENDED IN FAILURE...
CRITICAL MISSION FAILURE. THAT IS TO SAY, A JUMP INTO SUPER SHAME-TIME TERRITORY.
MY POOR BESPECTACLED BEAUTY OF A VICE PRESIDENT, AT THE MERCY OF THE WICKED HANDS OF A CROSS-DRESSING BRUTE...


YOU WICKED MONSTER!!
SAY WHAT?

WHAT HAPPENED TO MIKASA-SAN?! HAS SHE GONE TO HER DARK GRAVE AGAIN?!
"AGAIN"? Uh, what?
ISN'T THERE SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT YOU SHOULD BE...
LIAR! TYRANT! CROSS-DRESSING PERV!
YOU MAY FOOL EVERYONE WITH THAT CUTE APPEARANCE, BUT YOU'RE SNEERING AT THEM DEEP DOWN, AREN'T YOU!
TWITCH
THE FORMER CHAIRWOMAN WILL BE WEEPING UP IN HEAVEN!

SNATCH
CREAK
... HMPH.
WH-WHAT? YOU WANNA FIGHT ME?
I MAY DIE HERE, BUT JUSTICE WILL LIVE ON!
EEK! NOOO, DON'T TOUCH ME!
SWOOP
HUH...?
MATSURIKA.
RIGHT AWAY.
FWIP

ERRR...
AH.

SMACK
THE ROSARY BEADS...
Oh, yeah!!
I'LL HELP PICK THEM UP!

...UH?
I'LL TAKE IT TO A JEWELER TO BE REPAIRED AT ONCE.
THANKS.
SLAM

DAMN, IS HE STEAMED.
OUCH...
HOPE HE'LL LET ME OFF WITH PAYING HALF.
HOW MUCH IS THAT GONNA COST?
I SHOULD PAY FOR THE REPAIR, TOO.
I'LL SAY I'M SORRY LATER.
WELL, I DESERVE IT.
MMMMF!
TWEET TWEET
CHIRP CHIRP

WHAT A REFRESHING MORNING!
...
MARIYA NEVER CAME BACK, HUH?
I'LL DROP BY MARIYA'S CLASSROOM AND APOLOGIZE BEFORE SHORT HOMEROOM.
AS THEY SAY, STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT! THE SOONER HE FORGIVES ME, THE BETTER.

Oh!
SPEAK OF THE DEVIL, THERE'S MARIYA NOW!
MORNING, MARIYA!
HEY, ABOUT YESTERDAY ...

HEY?

HE DIDN'T HEAR ME?
WELL, WHATEVER.
DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
MY NEAR MISSES WITH MARIYA CONTINUED THEREAFTER...

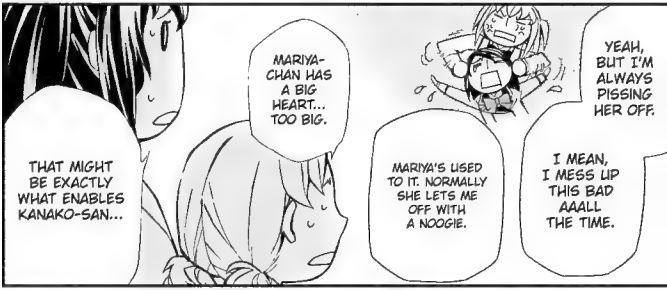
MARIYAAA!
MARIYA!
DANGIT, MARIYA!

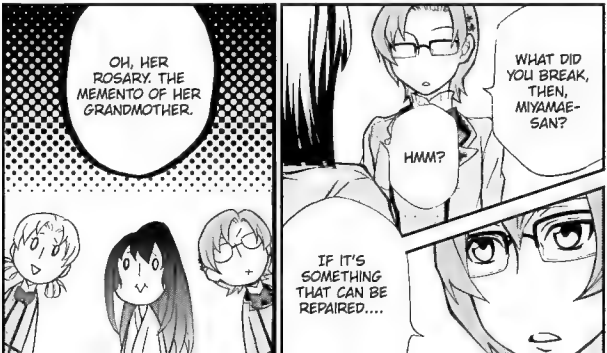
SO IT'S THE SILENT TREATMENT, HUH?

I MAY BE A DULLARD, BUT EVEN I CAN TAKE A HINT AFTER SO MANY TIMES.

ANOTHER REFRESHING MORNING!
EMPTY
DUDE NEVER CAME HOME LAST NIGHT EITHER?
...
...AND THAT'S WHAT'S UP. SHE WON'T EVEN LET ME APOLOGIZE!
SHE'S IGNORING ME!
HOW IMMATURE IS THAT?

...IN THAT CASE...
IT WOULDN'T BE STRANGE IF SHE NEVER WANTED TO SPEAK TO YOU AGAIN, WOULD IT...?
I MEAN, NOT TO SAY I'M TOTALLY BLAMELESS, AFTER I WENT THROUGH HER DRAWERS AND BROKE SOMETHING OF HERS...


THAT MIGHT BE EXACTLY WHAT ENABLES KANAKO-SAN...
MARIYA-CHAN HAS A BIG HEART... TOO BIG.
MARIYA'S USED TO IT. NORMALLY SHE LETS ME OFF WITH A NOOGIE.
I MEAN, I MESS UP THIS BAD AAALL THE TIME.
YEAH, BUT I'M ALWAYS PISSING HER OFF.


OH, HER ROSARY. THE MEMENTO OF HER GRANDMOTHER.
HMM?
WHAT DID YOU BREAK, THEN, MIYAMAE-SAN?
IF IT'S SOMETHING THAT CAN BE REPAIRED....

GYAA!!!!
I ADMIT I MESSED UP, BUT THE WIRE SNAPPED AND THE BEADS FELL ALL OVER THE FLOOR, THAT'S ALL.
I MEAN, I'LL PAY FOR THE REPAIRS.
...LIKE, A THIRD OF IT...
UMM...
THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS I SHOULD SAY TO YOU, BUT DON'T YOU THINK THAT THE WIRE ITSELF WAS ALSO AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE KEEPSAKE?
Oh my God!!
I NEVER EVEN CONSIDERED THAT!
IF SOMEONE TOUCHED OR DAMAGED A MEMENTO OF YOUR OWN MOTHER WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION, WOULDN'T THAT MAKE YOU UPSET?
WOULDN'T YOU BE ANGRY?

DIIING DOOONG
UH OH...
HAVE I JUST OPENED A DOOR THAT I SHOULDN'T HAVE?
Ah! THERE'S THE WARNING BELL! BETTER GET TO CLASS!
...NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I NEVER GOT A MEMENTO OF MY MOTHER.
HUH?

DIIING DOOONG

MIKIMIKI
YUP, I DO. BUT I DON'T ACTUALLY WEAR A WRISTWATCH SO THE BATTERY'S DEAD.
SISTERS
YUP, DO BUT DON T ACTUALLY WEAR A WRISTWATCH SO THE BATTERY S DEAD

YUME
DO I HAVE A MEMENTO OF MOM? YEAH, OF COURSE. I BROUGHT IT WITH ME TO AMERICA TOO.
SISTERS
HEY DO YOU TWO HAVE A MEMENTO OR SOMETHING OF MOM? YOU DON T R GHT?
YUP, DO BUT DON T ACTUALLY WEAR A WRISTWATCH SO THE BATTERY S DEAD

YUME
JEEZ, WE AGREED ON TIMEPIECES SO IT WOULD BE SOMETHING WE WOULD USE!!
MIKIMIKI
DID WE? DO YOU EVEN LOOK AT CLOCKS IF YOU HAVE YOUR CELL PHONE THO?
YUME
HEY, SHOULDN'T YOU TWO BE IN CLASS?
MIYAMAE-SAN.
MIYAMAE KANAKO-SAN.
WHOA WHOA WHOA. DUDE.
YOU GUYS ARE IGNORING ME AND HAVING YOUR OWN CONVERSATION NOW?

STUDENT COUNCIL OFFICE
CLINT
NOT ONLY DID YOU GO THROUGH HER THINGS, BUT YOU BROKE SOMETHING?
HAVE YOU NO CONCEPT OF BOUNDARIES?

AH.
COME DOWN TO THE OFFICE FOR THIS AFTER SCHOOL.

I, MIKASA YOSHINO, WILL PROTECT YOUR SECRET IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO...
SHIDOU-SAN.
IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS.
EVERYONE HAS A SECRET OR TWO, DON'T THEY?
HUH?
UH, WHAT?

AH...
SAY WHAT?
YOU NEED TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES. THINK OF YOUR FUTURE.
WE CAN'T LIVE STUCK IN THE PAST.
UH... WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MIKASA-SAN, THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED IF YOU HADN'T, YOU KNOW....

KOTOBUKI SHIOMI
A FLAWLESS DEDUCTION
AND EGGING HER ON BY SAYING SHE'D DISTRACT SHIDOU-SAN HERSELF!!
INSISTING THAT IF THEY WENT THROUGH THE DORM ROOM, THEY'D FIND SECRET PROOF OR SOMETHING.
THIS IS ALL BECAUSE YOSHINO-CHAN PUSHED MIYAMAE-SAN TOO FAR, ISN'T IT?

SAY, MIYAMAE-SAN?
CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE THAT MIGHT HAVE UPSET SHIDOU-SAN?
HUH?
SOMETHING ELSE...
I CAN ONLY GUESS.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO KEEP THAT IN MIND WHEN YOU TALK TO HER.
YOU'RE ONE OF HER CLOSEST FRIENDS.
IF YOU FIND IT STRANGE FOR HER TO BE THIS UPSET...
...THEN YOU MAY BE ONTO SOMETHING.
IT'S POSSIBLE THAT SOMETHING ELSE YOU DID MIGHT HAVE OFFENDED HER.
OKAY?
KEEP A CLEAR HEAD TO THE VERY END.
DON'T SAY ANYTHING BELLIGERENT OR UNNECESSARY. GIVE HER AN HONEST APOLOGY FIRST AND FOREMOST. LET HER SEE THAT YOU WANT TO MAKE UP.
EMPHASIZE THAT, AND EVERYTHING WILL TURN OUT ALL RIGHT.
SHE ISN'T THE KIND OF PERSON TO REFUSE SINCERITY.
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
I'M SO SORRY I'M LATE.

I KNOW YOU'VE ONLY JUST ARRIVED, BUT WE'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE OURSELVES.
SOMETHING CAME UP.
HUH? WHAT CAME UP? I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING COMING UP.
OH, DEAR.
...
GOOD DAY, MARIYA-SAN.
SMILE

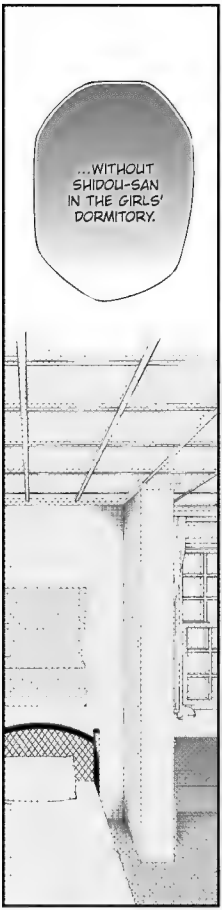
...MARIYA ...SAN...?
...ERM ...
HMPH
CLICK
CREAK
UHH...

IS IT SO MUCH TO ASK FOR YOU TO JUST HEAR ME OUT?!
HEY...
ARE YOU LISTENING?
FLIP
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?! WHY DO YOU LOOK ALL UNCONCERNED ?!
DO YOU GET THE POSITION YOU'RE IN?
I KNOW YOUR LITTLE SECRET!

FORGET THAT, MARIYA! THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED TO SAY-
I'LL GIVE HIM AN HONEST APOLOGY AND SHOW HIM THAT I WANT TO MAKE UP...!
BUT I CAN'T GIVE UP YET!
SLAM
MAAAN... WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?
I WASTED YOUR ADVICE FROM THE GET-GO!
I'M SORRY, SHIOMI-SAN!
DON'T SAY ANYTHING BELLIGERENT OR UNNECESSARY.
DANG IT!!

ALWAYS SAYING THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT I MEAN TO SAY...
TEENAGE LIFE, RIGHT?

HE'S GOT TO SHOW UP AT OUR ROOM TODAY.
I GOTTA WRITE THIS THING BEFORE THEN...
That's it!
I CAN'T TRUST MY MOUTH, SO I'LL WRITE A LETTER!
I BET HE'D READ IT!
Eureka!


...WITHOUT SHIDOU-SAN IN THE GIRLS' DORMITORY.

CLEANED OUT
UH, HUH?

PEEK
OH, MIYAMAE-SAN? WELCOME HOOOME.
WHA WHA WHA WHA?
HUH?
UH?
WHA?

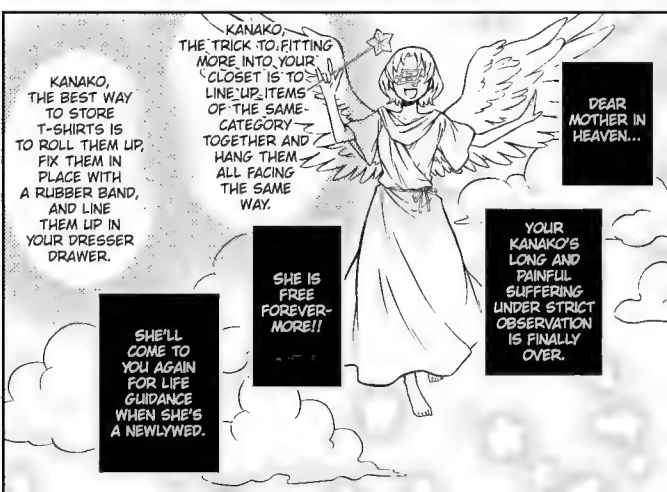
HOUSE MOTHER, WHERE'S ...?
I KNOOOW ...
IT'LL BE LOOONELY, WON'T IT...

Prayer81
Find Out Shidou Mariya's Secret! Part ④
IT'LL BE LOOONELY, WON'T IT...
...WITHOUT SHIDOU-SAN IN THE GIRLS' DORMITORY.
MARIYA ...
...MOVED OUT OF THE DORM?!

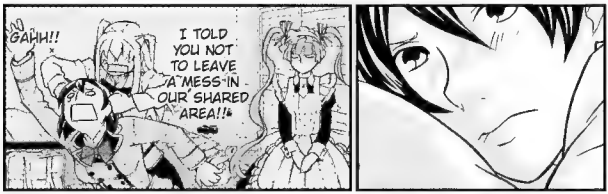
Prayer81
Find Out Shidou Mariya's
Secret! Part ④

POP POP POP
CHEEEERS!

NO MORE YELLING AT CRUMBS!
NO MORE HIDING IN A CORNER OF THE ROOM TO CHANGE!
HELLO, READING EVER-SO-SLIGHTLY SUGGESTIVE PINUP MAGS RIGHT OUT IN THE OPEN!

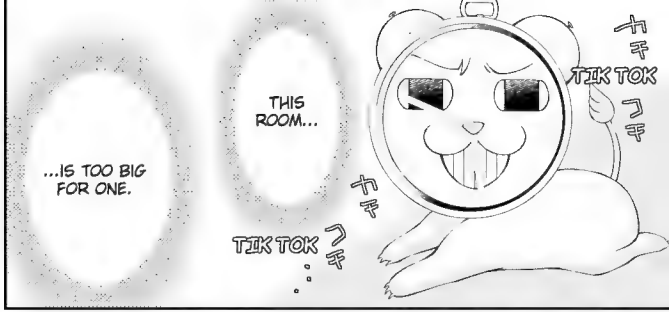

KANAKO, THE TRICK TO FITTING MORE INTO YOUR CLOSET IS TO LINE UP ITEMS OF THE SAME-CATEGORY TOGETHER AND HANG THEM ALL FACING THE SAME WAY.
KANAKO, THE BEST WAY TO STORE T-SHIRTS IS TO ROLL THEM UP, FIX THEM IN PLACE WITH A RUBBER BAND, AND LINE THEM UP IN YOUR DRESSER DRAWER.
DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
YOUR KANAKO'S LONG AND PAINFUL SUFFERING UNDER STRICT OBSERVATION IS FINALLY OVER.
SHE IS FREE FOREVER-MORE!!
SHE'LL COME TO YOU AGAIN FOR LIFE GUIDANCE WHEN SHE'S A NEWLYWED.

I'M IN YOUR HANDS, KANAKO-ONEESAMA.
AND NOW THAT THERE'S AN EMPTY BED, THAT MEANS NEXT YEAR A NEW, CUTE YOUNGER GIRL WILL MOVE IN HERE WITH ME, DOESN'T IT?!
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME, I'LL TAKE GOOOOD CARE OF YOU! MY HANDS WILL SEE TO YOUR EVERY NEED!
CUE OUR DAYS OF PASSION!! THEY'RE ALMOST HEEERE!!
YEEEEE!
AND THUS SHALL LOVE BLOSSOM!!
WHAT BEGINS AS ADMIRATION SHALL BECOME...
LOVE!!!


GAHH!!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO LEAVE A MESS IN OUR SHARED AREA!!

READING THAT KIND OF BOOK IN SECRET... ISN'T THAT EXACTLY WHAT MAKES IT OBSCENE?
LEAVE ME ALONE!!

GODDAMN!!
THAT DAMN MARIYA!
HUFF PUFF
HE THINKS HE CAN JUST COME AND GO AS HE PLEASES?! WHAT'S WITH THAT?!
YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW THIS STARTED OUT AS MY FAULT, BUT HE'S SO GONNA GET IT TOMORROW!
HUFF PUFF
AME NO KISAKI GIRLS' DORMITORY NUMBER-TWO
DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I'M UNABLE TO ENJOY HAVING A PRIVATE ROOM.
ALTHOUGH IF I GO WITH THIS FLOW, IT COULD END UP BEING A LETTER OF CHALLENGE...
OH!
YEAH, I BETTER WRITE THAT LETTER OF APOLOGY.

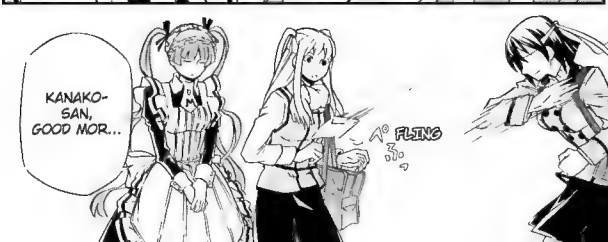

...IS TOO BIG FOR ONE.
THIS ROOM...
TIK TOK
TIK TOK

TWEET
TWEET
TWEET
GWSH

GODSPEED, KANAKO!☆
IT'S TIME...
...TO MOVE OUT...!!
SITTING IN THE ROOM WITHOUT MARIYA, THINKING BACK ON THIS LITTLE MORE THAN HALF A YEAR...
I REALIZED THAT I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANY FUN MEMORIES WITH HIM.
AND YEAH, I GET THE FEELING THAT BEING ETERNALLY RID OF HIM WOULD PROBABLY MAKE FOR A MUCH MORE FUN SCHOOL LIFE.

BUT STILL...
I AM SO NOT ACCEPTING THIS KIND OF GOODBYE!

MARIYAAA!!
OH!


KANAKO-SAN, GOOD MOR...
FLING

WHAT YOU DID WAS A REAL DAMN SHOCK! YOU TRYING TO TRAUMATIZE ME?
HUH?
I GET THAT YOU DON'T LIKE ME, BUT CUT THE CRAP!
WHAT, YOU NOT GONNA TALK TO ME EVER AGAIN?
UH?
HUH?
A LETTER?
FLUTTER
CA...
CALM DOWN, KANA-CHAN.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU LEFT WITHOUT SAYING A WORD....
CAN'T YOU JUST LOGIC ME TO DEATH LIKE ALWAYS?!
SSHH
WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT THIS SOMEWHERE MORE PRIVATE.
WOULD YOU MIND IF WE DISCUSSED IT LATER?
I'M SORRY. I'M HONESTLY NOT SURE WHAT I DID TO HURT YOUR FEELINGS.
WAIT, "KANA-CHAN"?
SHIZU...
...SAN?

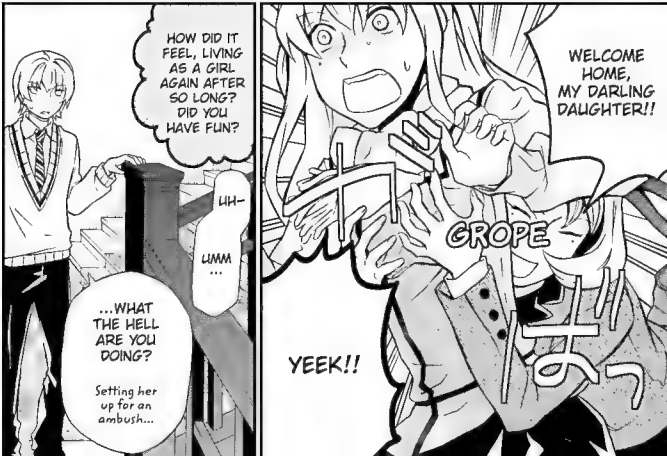
HUH? UH.
OKAY.
WAS THIS FOR ME?
I'LL READ IT-
AH!
SNATCH

ERR...
JUST ...
FORGET ABOUT THIS, OKAY...?

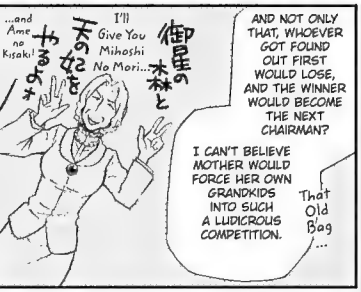
MOVING OUT WASN'T ENOUGH FOR HIM? HE HAD TO SWITCH PLACES WITH HIS LITTLE SISTER, TOO?
DOES MARIYA HATE THE THOUGHT OF RUNNING INTO ME THAT MUCH?
CRUMPLE

KA-CHAK
I'M HOME.

IS NO ONE HOME? HELLOOOO!
HMM?
THAT'S STRANGE.


HOW DID IT FEEL, LIVING AS A GIRL AGAIN AFTER SO LONG? DID YOU HAVE FUN?
UH-
UMM ...
...WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
Setting her up for an ambush...
WELCOME HOME, MY DARLING DAUGHTER!!
GROPE
YEEK!!

AND HOW WAS YOUR DAY AT MIHOSHI NO MORI?
MEH.
AVERAGE.
NO THANKS.
HMMM? DID YOU WANT TO BE GROPED TOO, MY DARLING SON?


AND NOT ONLY THAT, WHOEVER GOT FOUND OUT FIRST WOULD LOSE, AND THE WINNER WOULD BECOME THE NEXT CHAIRMAN?
I CAN'T BELIEVE MOTHER WOULD FORCE HER OWN GRANDKIDS INTO SUCH A LUDICROUS COMPETITION.
That Old Bag...
I'll Give You Mihoshi No Mori...
御星の木林と
天の女を
あるよ
...and Ame no Kisaki!

IF THIS GOT OUT, IT COULD DESTROY BOTH SCHOOLS' REPUTATIONS.
WHO KNOWS HOW MUCH IT COULD DAMAGE YOUR OWN FUTURES, AS WELL...

I KNEW YOU TWO SWAPPED PLACES ALL THE TIME WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE...
BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE STILL AT IT NOW!

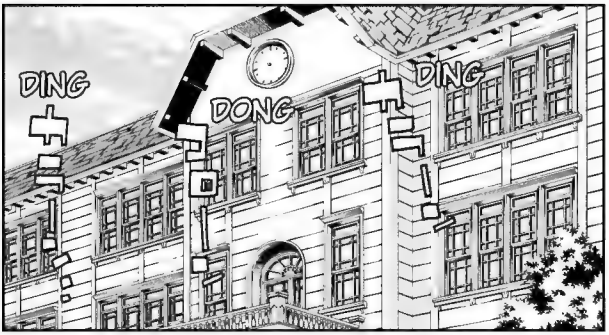
I'M SURE YOU TWO ARE ALREADY WELL AWARE OF THE RISKS!
ON!
AND!
SO!
DON'T YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT DECEIVING THOSE AROUND YOU?
ALWAYS WEARING A MASK, TRACKING ALL YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AS MERE DATA, IN THE NAME OF SHARING INFORMATION BETWEEN EACH OTHER...
DO YOU TWO ENJOY LIVING LIKE THIS?

YOUR EVERYDAY LIVES AS TEENAGERS ARE WORTH EXPONENTIALLY MORE THAN EACH DAY AS AN ADULT.
THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS YOU ONLY HAVE A CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE NOW.
SPECIAL EVENTS.
SCHOOL CLUBS.
THE MEMORIES YOU MAKE WITH YOUR FRIENDS? YOU'LL TREASURE THOSE FOR YOUR WHOLE LIVES.
DON'T YOU NEED A BEST FRIEND? SOMEONE YOU COULD TELL ANYTHING?
SPILLING YOUR SECRETS, LISTENING TO THEM SPILL THEIRS...
DON'T YOU NEED SOMEONE YOU CAN WORRY WITH, CRY WITH, LAUGH WITH?

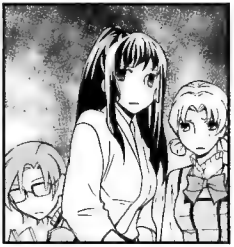
AT THE VERY LEAST, FOR THE SHORT TIME I'M HOME IN JAPAN...
I WANT YOU TO LIVE YOUR REAL LIVES. MARIYA WILL LIVE AS MARIYA, AND SHIZU WILL LIVE AS SHIZU.
...GOT IT.
...WELL, THAT'S ALL I'LL SAY.
I'M SURE YOU TWO HAVE YOUR OWN THOUGHTS ON THIS.

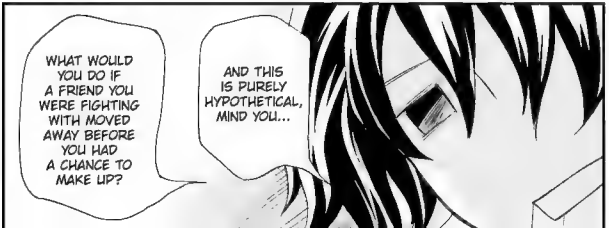
...WE'RE FOND OF OUR CURRENT LIFESTYLE.
WELL, IF YOU SAY SO.
AND YOU TWO. YOU CAN GO HOME TO THE SHINOUJI HOUSE ONCE IN A WHILE, YOU KNOW?
MATSURIKA. RINDOU.

...INCIDENTALLY, BROTHER DEAR, DID SOMETHING HAPPEN BETWEEN YOU AND KANA-CHAN?
HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I THOUGHT THE RULE WAS THAT WE HAD TO TELL EACH OTHER EVERY LITTLE THING THAT HAPPENS.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, MATSURIKA?
CORRECT.
BE THAT AS IT MAY, I DO NOT RECALL ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR HAPPENING WITH KANAKO-SAMA.
...
KANA-CHAN IS SENSITIVE. DON'T BULLY HER TOO MUCH, OKAY?
MEEP?!
JUMP


DING
DONG
DING

WELL ...
...WHAT'S WRONG NOW, KANAKO-CHAN?
WHAT IF...




WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A FRIEND YOU WERE FIGHTING WITH MOVED AWAY BEFORE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO MAKE UP?
AND THIS IS PURELY HYPOTHETICAL, MIND YOU...

CAN'T YOU APOLOGIZE BY EMAIL OR BY LETTER?
I THINK THEY'D IGNORE IT...
BLARGH
REALLY ...?
ぽたん
POMF
DID YOU CAUSE TROUBLE FOR SOMEONE AGAIN?
?
I SAID IT'S HYPO-THETICAL.
THEY ARE SO NOT MY FRIEND. PLUS THEY HAVEN'T MOVED.
I KNEW IT...
IN THAT CASE, WHY DON'T YOU ASK A MUTUAL FRIEND TO MEDIATE?
A MUTUAL FRIEND...
WHOOOO

FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
STAR EMERALD FROM SANTA TELEZINHA MINE
I.O.U. CARDS
BAM
I NEED A FAVOR!

STRUT
STRUT
STRUT
STRUT
IS THAT SO? WHAT A PITY.
...NEVER MIND. I'LL MANAGE.

PLEASE DON'T TOUCH ME FOR NO REASON.
WAIT! AT LEAST HEAR ME OUT!
BESIDES, I'M NOT THE ONE YOU WANT TO SPEAK TO, AM I?
HUH?

HEH
BAM
IN OTHER WORDS...
THIS IS HER ADVICE, ISN'T IT?!
I HOPE YOU'RE READY, MARIYA.
MY APOLOGY'S SO EXTREME IT'LL LIGHT ON FIRE.
FOR REALSIES!
SERIOUSLY THOUGH, I LEARNED MY LESSON.
OH, JEEZ, I DON'T HAVE A GIFT. HOW EMBARRASSING.
I NEED SWEETS, OR FLOWERS OR SOMETHING...
THAT'S IT!!
BING

THIS CAME BACK FROM THE JEWELER'S.
SERIOUSLY? ALREADY?
WE MADE IT A RUSH ORDER.
THEY COULD'VE TAKEN THEIR TIME.
THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN EXPEDIENCY.
...MY SISTER SEEMED TO BE FUMING, BUT YOU ARE NOT, ARE YOU?
OH, I'M MAD.
SHE HAD THE GALL TO TRY TO THREATEN ME!

I BET SHE'S LIVING IT UP NOW THAT SHE THINKS SHE'S RID OF ME, BUT IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY!
SHE'LL BE CRYING OVER HER DASHED HOPES LATER.
CACKLE CACKLE
YOU'RE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT HOW SHE BROKE THE ROSARY?
YOU'RE TOO SOFT ON LADY KANAKO.
IT'S JUST A THING IN THE END.
AND IT'S NOT LIKE IT CAN'T BE REPAIRED.
I'LL PUNISH HER FOR RUMMAGING THROUGH MY STUFF LATER, MIND YOU.
ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE A POINT ABOUT OUR FAMILY BEING OVERLY LENIENT WHEN IT COMES TO RELATIVES.
CONSIDERING BOTH GRANDMA AND MOM...
THEN PLEASE BE MORE LENIENT WITH ME, AS WELL.
YOU CHEWED ME OUT THE OTHER DAY SIMPLY FOR DIGGING A TRAP HOLE IN THE YARD.

...TWO MARIYAS?
THAT'S THE FIRST THING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH?
...WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

I'M REMORSE-FUL.
ABOUT WHAT?
THAT'S SOME BROAD REMORSE.
CONCERNING ALL OF CREATION.
I'M REMORSEFUL ABOUT THAT, TOO.

THE LETTER INTO WHICH I POURED ALL OF THAT REMORSE FELL INTO THE FLOWERBED BEHIND ME...
IT'S ALL CRINKLED UP.
MY HEART, TOO, IS IN PIECES...

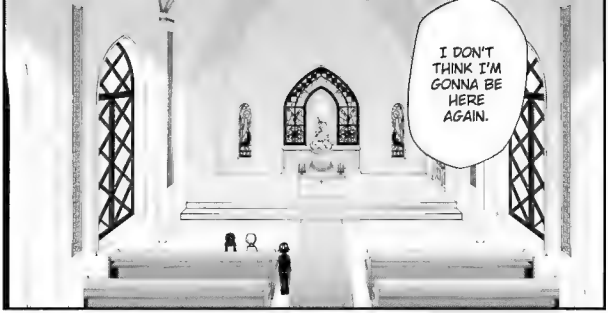
NOW THAT I'VE REACHED THE ZENITH OF MY APOLOGY, WHO MIGHT THAT BEAUTIFUL WOMAN BE?
I, KANAKO, AM DYING TO KNOW.

!!
I KNEW IT. YOU ARE KANA-CHAN, AREN'T YOU?
WELCOME! IT'S SO NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
YOU'RE HERE TO RETURN THE PENDANT, RIGHT?
PENDANT?
WHAT'S SHE TALKING ABOUT?

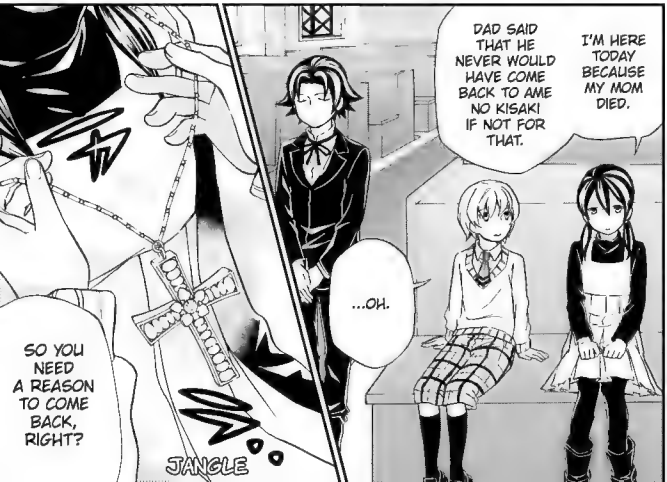
I KNEW IT. YOU ARE KANA-CHAN, AREN'T YOU?
WELCOME! IT'S SO NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
YOU'RE HERE TO RETURN THE PENDANT, RIGHT?
Prayer 2
While Finding Out Shidou Mariya's Secret, Mivamae Kanako Found Out (Etc) Part 1

Prayer82

While Finding Out Shidou Mariya's Secret, Miyamae Kanako Found Out (Etc) Part ①


I DON'T THINK I'M GONNA BE HERE AGAIN.

WHY NOT?
WE'RE FRIENDS NOW!


I'M HERE TODAY BECAUSE MY MOM DIED.
DAD SAID THAT HE NEVER WOULD HAVE COME BACK TO AME NO KISAKI IF NOT FOR THAT.
...OH.
SO YOU NEED A REASON TO COME BACK, RIGHT?
JANGLE

WOOOW! IT'S SO PRETTY!! I CAN HAVE IT?
I'M ONLY LENDING IT TO YOU.
THANK YOU! I'LL TREASURE IT!
YOU'RE ONLY BORROWING IT, UNDERSTAND?
IT'S A GIFT FROM MY GRANDMOTHER, SO IT'S A VERY IMPORTANT PENDANT.
I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU TO COME AND RETURN IT.
I LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY I CAN SEE YOUR SMILING FACE AGAIN, KANA-CHAN.
HUFF PUFF

DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
IF YOU COULD SUMMARIZE IN THREE SIMPLE LINES YOUR KANAKO'S FEELINGS ABOUT THIS FORESHADOWED STUFF ULTIMATELY BEING REVEALED IN MERE PAGES AFTER BEING DRAGGED OUT FOREVER...
MY KANAKO...
LITTLE MISS FORGETFUL!☆
THE PRINCE WHO GAVE ME MY CROSS PENDANT...
...WAS YOU, SHIZU-SAN?
THAT WAS TWO LINES!
YEAH...
YOU MEAN I LENT IT TO YOU, THOUGH.

I WAS A LITTLE SURPRISED THAT YOU'D FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT.
BUT I WAS HAPPY TO SEE MY CHEERFUL KANA-CHAN AGAIN.
SHIZU-SAN...

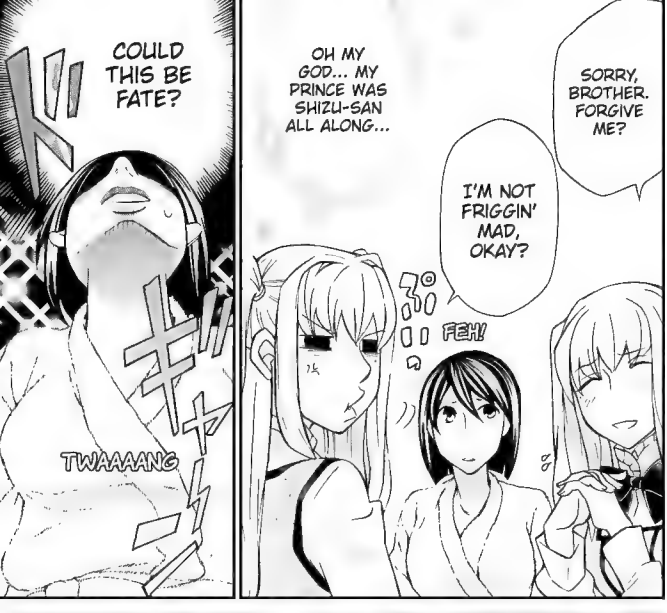
ACCORDING TO MY FLASHBACK, IT SEEMS LIKE RINDOU-SAN WAS THERE, TOO...
I was...
FRANKLY, I JUST DIDN'T CARE.
O-OH...

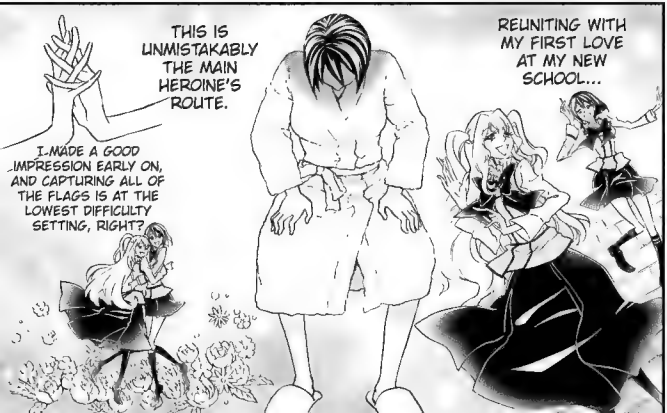
FIRST I'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS.
OH BOY.
SOMEBODY'S IN A BAAAAAD MOOD.

DUN DUN
I STOPPED HER FROM SAYING ANYTHING.
BROTHER, I...
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT SHARING EVERY LITTLE THING WE DO?
A PRINCE GAVE IT TO ME!
HUH?!
I'M SURE I'M MISTAKEN, BUT...
IT SEEMS MY DAUGHTER BROUGHT BACK SOMETHING EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE...
SHE COULDN'T HAVE STOLEN IT, RIGHT...?
MY DARLING DAUGHTER KEPT IT A SECRET FROM ME, TOO.
BUT KANA-CHAN'S FATHER CALLED ME ABOUT IT.

I'M NOT BENT OUT OF SHAPE.
NOW, NOW. IT'S ALL WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE.
FEH!
YOU TWO WERE GIVEN THOSE NECKLACES AS A PAIR, SO TO LEND IT OUT LIKE THAT...
WELL, MY DEAR SON WOULD HAVE GOTTEN BENT OUT OF SHAPE IF HE FOUND OUT.
HMPH!

MARIYA-SAMA ASIDE, I AM DISAPPOINTED THAT YOU DID NOT REPORT THIS TO ME.
PHOOEY
I'M SORRY, SISTER. THAT WAS INCONSIDERATE OF ME.
YOU'VE GOT QUITE A DIFFERENT TUNE NOW THAT YOU'RE NOT TALKING TO ME.
IF I HAD SOUGHT YOUR AID, WE COULD HAVE EXPECTED A MORE AMUSING STORY.
RINDOU SAYING THAT DOES PISS ME OFF, THOUGH.
YOU NEVER EVEN RECOGNIZED THE DESIGN DESPITE IT BEING ALMOST THE SAME AS YOURS. THAT'S HOW LITTLE IT MEANT TO YOU. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
AH.
THAT HURTS.

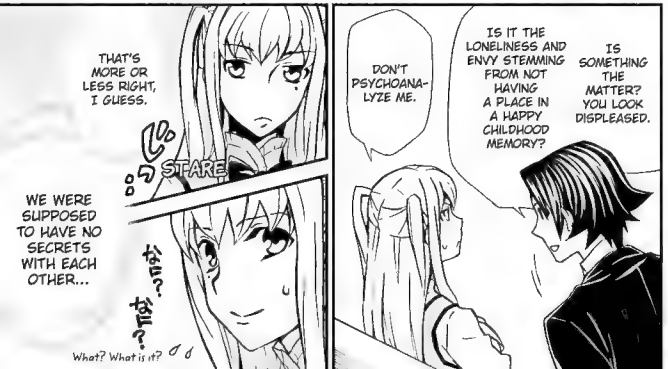

COULD THIS BE FATE?
TWAAAANG
OH MY GOD... MY PRINCE WAS SHIZU-SAN ALL ALONG...
I'M NOT FRIGGIN' MAD, OKAY?
SORRY, BROTHER. FORGIVE ME?
FEH!


THIS IS UNMISTAKABLY THE MAIN HEROINE'S ROUTE.
I-MADE A GOOD IMPRESSION EARLY ON, AND CAPTURING ALL OF THE FLAGS IS AT THE LOWEST DIFFICULTY SETTING, RIGHT?
REUNITING WITH MY FIRST LOVE AT MY NEW SCHOOL...

WHY DID YOU GIVE SOMETHING SO IMPORTANT TO A GIRL YOU'D ONLY JUST MET?
I ONLY LENT IT TO YOU.
ANYWAY, I DIDN'T THINK THAT HARD ABOUT IT, SO THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN SAY.
YES, KANA-CHAN?
...SAY, SHIZU-SAN?
THAT PENDANT...
IF IT'S PART OF A PAIR WITH MARIYA'S NECKLACE, IT MUST BE SUPER EXPENSIVE, RIGHT?
OH MY GOD!!
I'M FALLING FOR YOU!!
BUT SEEING YOU IN LOW SPIRITS LIKE THAT... I GUESS I JUST WANTED TO MAKE YOU SMILE.

WHEN THEY WERE BUT CHILDREN, THE TWO EXCHANGED THEIR FIRST VOWS OF LOVE.
YEARS LATER, THEY'RE REUNITED.
ONE OF THE PAIR FALLS FOR THE OTHER YET AGAIN, UNAWARE OF THEIR SHARED PAST.
THE OTHER HALF OF THE PAIR AFFECTIONATELY WATCHING OVER HER ALL THE WHILE...
PLUS GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME TO BE NICE TO YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE A DISTANT RELATIVE...
ARE YOU LISTENING?

...
COMING SOON TO TV!!
IT'S THE ULTIMATE LOVE STORY!!
HALLELUJAH
ぱぁぁ
あぁ


THAT'S MORE OR LESS RIGHT, I GUESS.
じぃ〜
STARE
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE NO SECRETS WITH EACH OTHER...
なに？
なに？
What? What is it?
DON'T PSYCHOANALYZE ME.
IS IT THE LONELINESS AND ENVY STEMMING FROM NOT HAVING A PLACE IN A HAPPY CHILDHOOD MEMORY?
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER? YOU LOOK DISPLEASED.

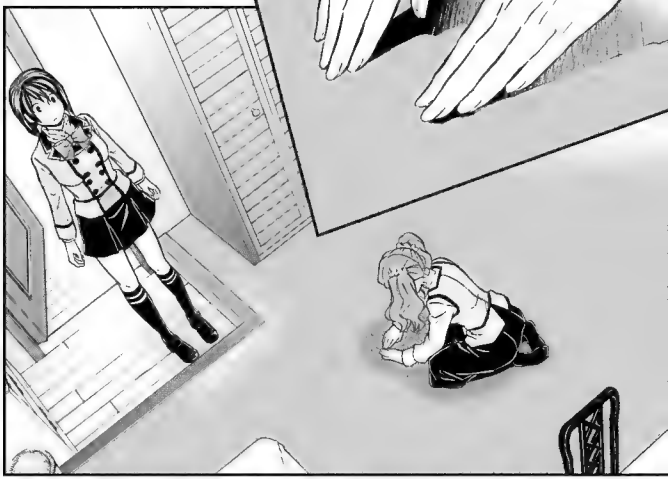
I THINK I'LL READ THIS APOLOGY LETTER OUT LOUD TO CHANGE UP THE MOOD.
GAAAHH!
BAD! BULLYING IS BAAAD!!
THAT'S LIKE HANGING UP A LOVE LETTER YOU GOT ON THE CLASS BLACKBOARD, YOU BASTARD!!
SHUT UP, ALREADY. IT'S MINE NOW, SO I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT WITH IT.
YOU NEED TO STUDY JAPANESE A LITTLE MORE.
THAT'S WHAT YOU GOT OUT OF IT?!
YOU USED THE WRONG KANJI, THE COMPOSITION RAMBLES, AND YOUR PUNCTUATION USE IS SLOPPY.

...BUT I GUESS YOUR REMORSE GOT THROUGH OKAY.
AH...
BROTHER ...
SAY WHAT?
SOB
SNIFF
...in the future.
SORRY, MOM.
I'M MOVING BACK INTO THE DORM. IF I LEAVE THIS SLOTH TO HER OWN DEVICES, SHE'LL GET HELD BACK A YEAR.
MY CURRENT LIFE...
...IS PRETTY FUN.

HEY, KANAKO.
HOW LONG ARE YOU GONNA LAZE AROUND IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HOME?
THE FRESH UNIFORM IS HERE.
GO CHANGE ALREADY.
TYRANT! YOU'RE OPPRESSING ME!
GOOD FOR YOU, THEN.

THE THINGS HE SAYS TICK ME OFF...
BUT THIS CRAPPY CROSS-DRESSER WILL BE MY BROTHER-IN-LAW ONE DAY...
THINKING OF IT LIKE THAT, I CAN APPRECIATE THIS SITUATION AS A DRY RUN OF LIVING TOGETHER WITH SOMEONE AND DEALING WITH IN-LAWS.

DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
YOUR KANAKO HAS FINALLY FOUND HER ONE TRUE LOVE HERE AT AME NO KISAKI.
I SWEAR TO LOVE AND CHERISH SHIDOU SHIZU-SAN UNTIL DEATH DO US PART!!
KA-CHAK
ガチャ。。



IT'S MY FIRST TIME, BUT...
PLEASE BE GENTLE WITH ME.
OH MY GOD! POLYGAMY COMING SOON?!
what? no?

Prayer83

While Finding Out Shidou Mariya's Secret, Miyamae Kanako Found Out (Etc) Part ②

I'M LAURA BRUNI. PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
YEEES.
SHE'S HERE FROM A SISTER SCHOOL IN ITALY FOR TWO WEEEKS.
A FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT?

ORIGINALLY, SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO STAY WITH ISHIMA-SAAAN.
BUT THE TIMING OVERLAPPED WITH SHIDOU-SAN'S TEMPORARY STAY AT HOME PERFECTLYYY.
I SEE...

OH, NO.
I'LL GO BACK HOME. I'M AT FAULT FOR SUDDENLY CHANGING MY PLANS.
SHOULD WE MOVE HER TO MY ROOM NOW, THEN?

YOU NEED YOUR FOCUS FOR YOUR UPCOMING CENTER EXAM.
YOU'RE SURE?
I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON THAT.
LAURA-SAN.
I'M SORRY FOR THE MIX-UP. I DIDN'T MEAN TO OVERWHELM YOU ON YOUR FIRST DAY HERE.
AME NO KISAKI IS HAPPY TO HOST YOU.
THOUGH WE ONLY HAVE A SHORT TIME TOGETHER, I HOPE WE'LL BE FRIENDS.
...
...ARE YOU MARIYA SHIDOU... SAN?
YES.

YOU ARE AS BEAUTIFUL AS I IMAGINED!

CLASP
ME TOO! I'LL DO ANYTHING!!
NICE TO MEET Y-
OKAY.
REACH
IF YOU EVER NEED ANYTHING, DON'T HESITATE TO COME TO ME.
I LIVE IN THIS DORM, TOO.
?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
?
LET'S MAKE THIS TIME TOGETHER UNFORGET-TABLE!!

I ALWAYS WANTED TO WEAR A SCHOOL UNIFORM!
DOES IT LOOK GOOD ON ME?
WE ALL MATCH! CURIOUS! CUTE!!
I AM LAURA BRUNI! NICE TO MEET YOU ALL!
SO THIS IS A JAPANESE SCHOOL LUNCH!
I LOVE SOBA NOODLES!
LAURA-CHAN, YOU CAN USE CHOPSTICKS? WOW!

THUNK TH THUNK
Brave!!
AAA...
REAL JAPANESE ARCHERY!!
SO WABI-SABI! AMAZING!!
WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY?
I HAD SO MUCH FUN ON MY FIRST DAY!
THANK YOU, KANAKO-SAN!

I MUST SEE MORE OF THIS SMILE!
TO TELL THE TRUTH, I WAS A LITTLE SCARED.
THANK GOODNESS I'M IN THE SAME DORM ROOM AND CLASS AS YOU.
SO INNOCENT ...
SO ADORABLE ...
LAURA-SAN...
I NEED YOUR ADVICE.
I DRAFTED UP AN ALL-YOU-CAN-NIPPON SCHEDULE FOR LAURA-CHAN.
THE PLAN IS TO DO IT THIS WEEKEND.
FLAP
THE HECK IS THIS?
WHAT ?
"AS SOON AS SATURDAY CLASSES END, HEAD DOWNTOWN."
??
PLEASE HAVE A LOOK AT THIS.
SLIP

TAKE A CRUISE BOAT FROM DAIBA TO ASAKUSA. ENJOY THE SUBURBS AND SKYTREE, THEN GET OUR FILL OF CUTENESS IN SHIBUYA OR HARAJUKU.
IN HOKKAIDO, WE'LL RELISH THE SEAFOOD SOLD AT THE MORNING MARKETS.
ON THE FLIGHT FROM NEW CHITOSE AIRPORT TO ITAMI AIRPORT, WE'LL LOOK DOWN ON THE MOUNTAINS OF THE CHUBU REGION.
WE'LL GET A VIEW OF THE TOUHOKU REGION WHILE ON AN OVERNIGHT TRAIN FROM UENO STATION TO HAKODATE, HOKKAIDO.
IN KYOTO, WE'LL DO THE GEISHA EXPERIENCE, AFTER WHICH WE'LL GO TO AN AMUSEMENT PARK IN OSAKA, THEN EAT CHUGOKU REGION SPECIALTY LUNCHES ON THE BULLET TRAIN, TAKING US TO HAKATA...
THIS SCHEDULE IS AS BUSY AS A HOLLYWOOD STAR TRAVELING TO PROMOTE A NEW MOVIE.

IF WE'RE GOING TO GET BACK TO AME NO KISAKI ON SUNDAY, WE'LL RUN OUT OF TIME AT KYUSHU.
DO YOU KNOW OF ANY SHADY TRICKS THAT CAN GET US THROUGH OKINAWA TOO?
ALSO, LEND ME TRAVEL MONEY.

...
KANAKO-KUN, YOU'RE A BONA-FIDE IDIOT.
...THERE WAS A SHORT-TERM EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM MONGOLIA IN MY CLASS ONCE BEFORE
...IN MY LAST SCHOOL, BEFORE I TRANS-FERRED TO AME NO KISAKI.
SHE WAS WITH US FOR TWO WEEKS, THE SAME AS LAURA-CHAN.
OH YEAH?
NISHIMURA KYOTARO* SUSPENSE STORIES TAUGHT ME THAT MURDERS THAT SEEM TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING AT TRAIN ROUTE FINDERS CAN ACTUALLY BE SOLVED WITHIN A TWO-HOUR PRIME TIME SLOT!!
WHAT GIVES?!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SOLVE RAILWAY MURDER MYSTERIES BY LOOKING AT THE TIMETABLES.
...LOOK, THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M GETTING AT.
*MYSTERY WRITER KNOWN FOR HIS "TRAIN SERIES" MYSTERIES.
SHE ARRIVED ON THE DAY OF THE CLOSING CEREMONY BEFORE SUMMER BREAK.
OH YEAH?!
SO OUR HOMEROOM TEACHER ENCOURAGED ANYBODY WHO HAD TIME TO GO VISIT HER OVER BREAK, ONLY HER HOMESTAY FAMILY LIVED IN THE MOUNTAINS... AN HOUR AND A HALF AWAY BY BIKE.
SHE LEFT JAPAN WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO ATTEND CLASS WITH US EVEN ONCE.
CAN YOU EVEN CALL THAT AN EXCHANGE STUDENT?
HER GOVERNMENT DECIDED ON THE TIME PERIOD AND PAID FOR THE TRIP, SO I GUESS SHE HERSELF HAD NO SAY IN WHAT DATES SHE WOULD BE HERE.

INCIDENTALLY, WE HAD ANOTHER EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM CHILE WHO SPENT EXACTLY ONE YEAR WITH US FROM THE OPENING CEREMONY TO THE END OF THE YEAR, AND WENT HOME JAPANESE.
BUT HE WAS A DUDE, SO SCREW THAT.
...SHE WAS SO CUTE, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO FOR HER...
HONEY ...
HONEY ?
I'D EXPECT NOTHING LESS FROM MY FUTURE BETTER HALF.
SHE KNOWS ME BETTER THAN ANYONE...
EVEN IN BOYS' CLOTHES, YOU'RE CUTER THAN ANYONE IN THE WORLD...
TH-THANKS.
I DON'T WANT TO FEEL THAT SENSE OF HELP-LESSNESS AGAIN.
I WANT HER TO GO HOME WITH PLENTY OF HAPPY MEMORIES OF JAPAN.
SWISH
LISTEN, KANA-CHAN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK THE STUDENT FROM MONGOLIA WANTED TO DO IN JAPAN?
YOU'RE VERY KIND, KANA-CHAN.
...BUT WAS THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCE SHE WAS HOPING FOR...
I MEAN, SHE TRAVELED FROM FAR AWAY AND ACROSS THE SEA, JUST TO GET TO JAPAN.
HUH?
...SOMETHING SHE COULD ONLY GET BY RUSHING BETWEEN TRAINS AND FLIGHTS?
OF COURSE YOU'D WANT HER TO SEE ALL OF THE NICE PLACES IN JAPAN.

TOURIST SPOTS AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE. YOU CAN GO SIGHTSEEING WHEN YOU'RE OLDER.
MARIYA ?
IT'S THE SAME FOR ADMIRING THE SNOW OR THE AUTUMN LEAVES IN KYOTO FROM A TRAIN WINDOW.
YOU'LL HAVE COUNTLESS CHANCES TO SEE THAT AS LONG AS YOU'RE ALIVE.
If you have the time and the money for it.

I WANT...
...TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LIFE IN JAPAN.

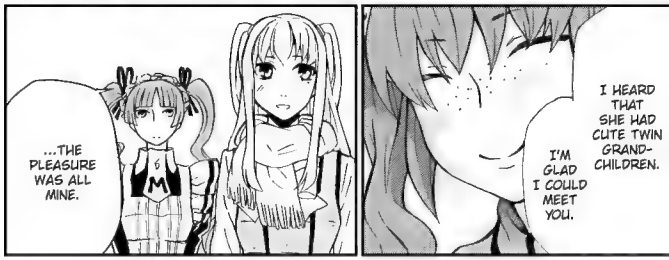
WHAT DOES LAURA-SAN WANT TO DO...
...AT HER EXCHANGE SCHOOL?
AT AME NO KISAKI?
HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT ASKING HER THAT?

I WANT TO LEARN A LOT AT AME NO KISAKI, THE SCHOOL MY TEACHER LOVED.
I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE JAPAN THAT MY FAVORITE TEACHER LOVED.
MY FAVORITE TEACHER TOLD US MANY STORIES ABOUT JAPAN.

I WANT TO BE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE AT AME NO KISAKI.
ALSO, THERE'S SOMEONE ...
...I WANT TO SEE AGAIN.
SOMEONE YOU WANT TO SEE?
LAURA-SAN...
LEARNING IS INDEED THE MAIN TASK OF A STUDENT.
MARVE-LOUS.

IT CAN'T BE TRUE...
YOUR GRANDMOTHER WAS ALSO THE CHAIRWOMAN OF THE SISTER SCHOOL IN ITALY, HUH?
ACTUALLY, SHE HELD THE POSITION OVER THERE FIRST.

BACK THEN, MY GRANDFATHER WAS CHAIRMAN OF AME NO KISAKI. HE FELL IN LOVE WITH HER AT FIRST SIGHT.
THEY MADE THE SCHOOLS SISTER SCHOOLS WHEN THEY GOT MARRIED.
SO THAT'S THE STORY?
THAT'S BEAUTIFUL.


I HEARD THAT SHE HAD CUTE TWIN GRAND-CHILDREN.
I'M GLAD I COULD MEET YOU.
...THE PLEASURE WAS ALL MINE.

SHE SEEMED SO ENERGETIC JUST HALF A YEAR AGO...
I WANTED TO TALK TO HER AGAIN, HERE IN JAPAN.
CHAIRWOMAN ELAINE INTRODUCED ME TO THE BEAUTY OF JAPAN.
©HH
LAURA-SAN'S FAVORITE TEACHER WAS MARIYA'S...
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

HALF A YEAR AGO?
NOT ONE AND A HALF OR TWO YEARS AGO?
YES. SHE CAME TO MY SCHOOL TO WORK WITH THE NEW CHAIRMAN.
SHE SAID SHE WOULDN'T COME TO SCHOOL ANYMORE BECAUSE OF HER HEALTH...
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
GRANDMA DIED MORE THAN A YEAR AGO!
NOW THAT I THINK BACK ON IT, SHE DID SEEM A LITTLE TOO THIN BACK THEN.
IS SHE GETTING HER JAPANESE MIXED UP?
IS SHE TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE?

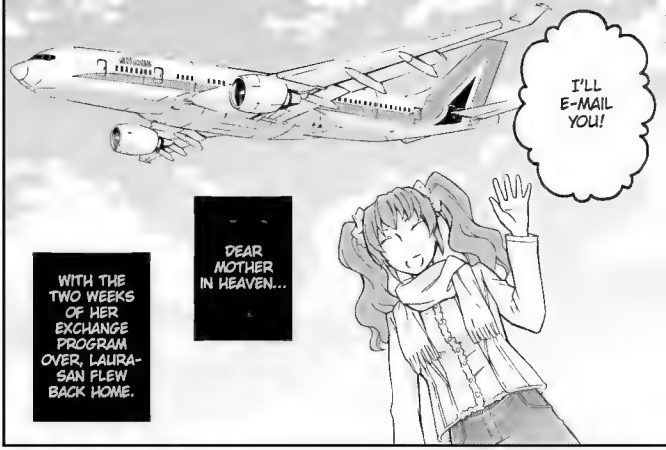
OR-
...MARIYA AND SHIZU ARE STRONG CHILDREN.
APPARENTLY THEY ENJOY THEIR CURRENT LIFESTYLES, SO I WON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THAT COMPETITION.
I WANT TO SHOUT "WHAT THE HELL, OLD BAT," AT YOU, BUT I'LL HOLD THAT IN.
...BUT DECEIVING EVEN ME, MY DARLING HUSBAND, AND THE REST OF OUR RELATIVES BY HOLDING A FAKE FUNERAL...
...AND HIDING AWAY? WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
DO YOU WANT TO MAKE THOSE KIDS GO THROUGH THE PAIN OF LOSING YOU TWICE?

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

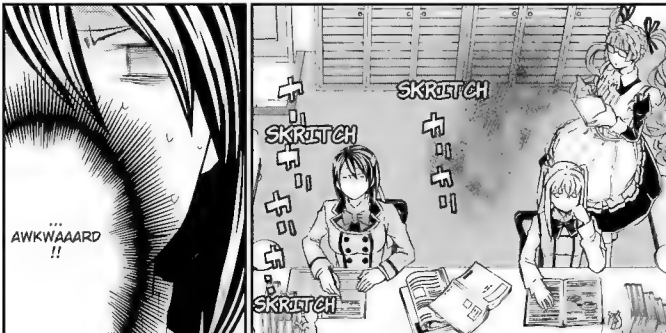
MARIA HOLIC

MARIA HOLIC 3

Prayer84
For a Long, Long Goodbye
Part ①


I'LL E-MAIL YOU!
DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
WITH THE TWO WEEKS OF HER EXCHANGE PROGRAM OVER, LAURA-SAN FLEW BACK HOME.

AND IN HER PLACE, MARIYA MOVED BACK INTO GIRLS' DORM NUMBER TWO ONLY...


...
AWKWAAARD
!!
SKRITCH
SKRITCH
SKRITCH

HEY, MARIYA-SAAAN?
CAN WE TALK OR SOMETHING? WE'RE ROOMMATES AND ALL.
IT'S PRETTY TENSE IN HERE, HUH?
BE QUIET AND FOCUS ON STUDYING FOR EXAMS.
YOU'D BETTER NOT END UP FAILING EVERY SINGLE EXAM AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER AGAIN.
IS HE GOING THROUGH THAT REBELLIOUS TEENAGER PHASE?
FOR THE ONE AND ONLY SHIDOU MARIYA TO SHOOT BACK SUCH AN UNINSPIRED COMEBACK...
WHEN DID YOU BECOME SUCH A DULLARD?
WHAT ?
CLATTER
I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO SAY THIS, BUT I RESPECTED YOUR COMEDIC SENSE, YOU KNOW!
TELL ME OFF! MAKE ME FEEL THE SHARP KNIFE OF COMEDY!
YOU'RE ANNOYING.

SERIOUSLY. SHUT UP.
IF THE FUNNY MAN COULD GET LAUGHS ON HIS OWN, MANZAI COMEDIANS WOULDN'T NEED TO USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM!
THE STRAIGHT MAN'S QUIPS ARE THE SPICE THAT MAKES THE FUNNY MAN'S GAGS SUBLIME!
THAT'S NOT RIGHT! THAT'S NOT A COMEDIC QUIP! IT'S JUST YOUR THOUGHTS!
IT'S DECEMBER NOW.
SWOOSH
LISTEN TO THIS, GUYS!
I MANAGED TO ONLY FAIL THREE SUBJECTS THIS TIME!!

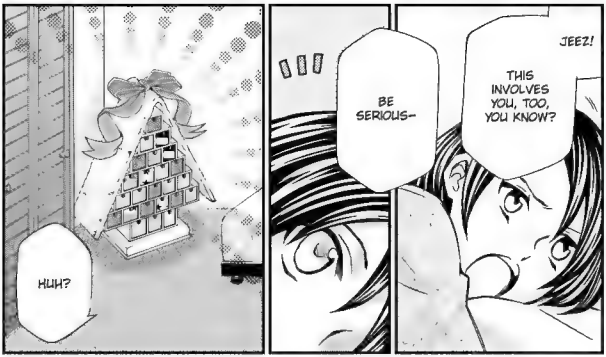
NOW I CAN RELAX AND GET READY FOR THE BIGGEST EVENT OF THE YEAR AT A MISSION SCHOOL: CHRISTMAS.
PERHAPS LIVING WITH LAURA-SAN WAS A GOOD INFLUENCE ON BOTH PARTIES.
YOU WORKED REAL HARD THIS TIME, KANAKO-CHAN!
...HUH.
CHRISTMAS CAROLS SUNG BY LOVELY LITTLE BIRDS.
YULE LOG CAKES. GINGERBREAD MEN.
STOLLEN. PANETTONE. CHRISTMAS PUDDING. AN ABUNDANCE OF OTHER SWEETS.
A SHINING STAR OF HOPE AT THE TOP OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.
TEASING KISSES EXCHANGED BENEATH THE MISTLETOE...

I WONDER IF THE NORMALLY INNOCENTLY DRESSED HIGH-CLASS YOUNG LADIES WILL MAKE MERRY IN SEXY SANTA OUTFITS AND SUCH?
AHNING
I CAN'T WAAAAIT!
YOU'LL HAVE MAKEUP EXAMS BEFORE THEN...
IT'S KANAKO-CHAN'S FIRST CHRISTMAS HERE, HUH?

I'M HAPPY JUST SPENDING CHRISTMAS WITH YOU, KANA-CHAN.
AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, IT'LL BE MY FIRST CHRISTMAS SPENT WITH A GIRLFRIEND!
WHAT SHOULD I GET FOR HER CHRISTMAS PRESENT?
OH, GOD!! MY SHIZU-SAN, SO MODEST AND PERFECT!!
EVERYONE LOOKS FORWARD TO IT MORE THAN MASS ON THE DAY OF...
WE HAVE THIS TRADITION FOR ADVENT, STARTING A WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

AFTER CHRISTMAS, WE'LL HAVE OUR FIRST SHRINE VISIT OF THE NEW YEAR AS THE TEMPLE BELLS RING IN NEW YEAR'S EVE.
OUR WISH: "MAY THE TWO OF US ALWAYS BE TOGETHER."
OUR LOVE WILL BE AS STEADY AND STRONG AS THE RINGING OF THE BELLS.
I'M AT THE HEIGHT OF HAPPINESS!
...OR AT LEAST I SHOULD BE.
MY HEART SHOULD BE ALL AFLUTTER WITH THOUGHTS OF MY ONE TRUE LOVE.
SO HOW COME THERE'S THIS GLOOMINESS SMOLDERING DEEP DOWN?
WHAT'S WITH THIS WEIRD SENSE OF ANXIETY...?!

WHAT DO YOU THINK, MARIYA?
MAYBE IT'S THE MARRIAGE BLUES?
SHUDDUP.


HUH?
BE SERIOUS–
JEEZ! THIS INVOLVES YOU, TOO, YOU KNOW?

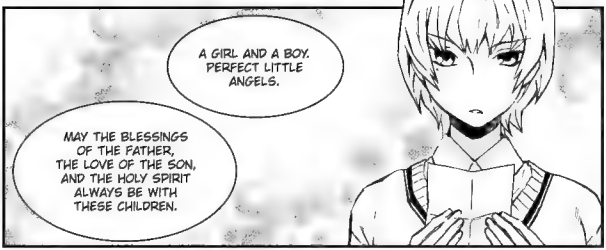
WHAM
WAZZAT? I DON'T REMEMBER THIS BEING IN MY ROOM!
DON'T TOUCH MY STUFF.
DON'T TOUCH ME!
AND WITH YOUR FOOT!
GROSS !!
IF I TOUCHED YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS, YOU'D END UP WITH HIVES OR WHATEVER. SHOULDN'T YOU BE MORE APPRECIATIVE?
OH MY GOD, SUCH KINDNESS! SUCH CLUMSY, CLUMSY KINDNESS!!
IT'S AN ADVENT CALENDAR. THEY SENT IT FROM HOME.

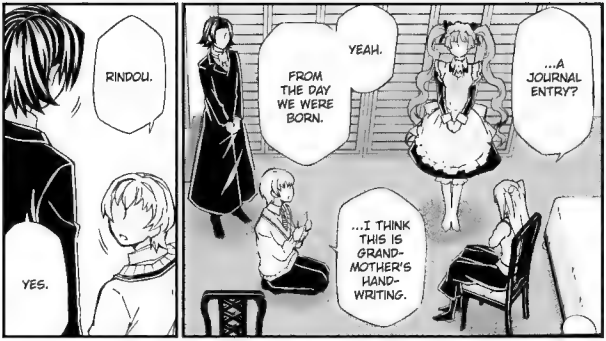
EVERY DAY, YOU OPEN ONE OF THE DRAWERS, TO COUNT DOWN THE DAYS TO CHRISTMAS.
YEAH.
SO LIKE, AFTER YOU'VE OPENED ALL OF THEM, IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY?
TUG
AND INSIDE THE DRAWERS ARE TREATS, BAUBLES, LETTERS, ET CETERA.
A LITTLE PRESENT INSIDE EACH ONE.
HUUUH.
もっちゃ
MUNCH
もっちゃ
MUNCH
もっちゃ
MUNCH
もっちゃ
MUNCH
AH, THE RICH AND THEIR EXCESS...

YOU HIT ME! YOU HIT ME WITH YOUR BARE HAND!!
DO YOU EVER LISTEN?
YOU'RE ONLY SUPPOSED TO OPEN ONE PER DAY.
SMACK
DON'T OPEN IT!
LEMME SEE. WHAT KINDA SNACK IS IN TOMORROW'S DRAWER?
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU TO KEEP YOUR HANDS TO YOURSELF--
NO KID WOULD FOLLOW THAT RULE!
THEY'D OBVIOUSLY GO THROUGH THE WHOLE THING ON DAY ONE!

MARIYA-SAMA?
THIS IS...
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
HOUSE MOTHER?
SHINDOU-SAAAN.
KA-CHAK
SHIZU-SAN SAYS HE'S ON HIS WAY HEEERE.

HEY NOW.
MY ONE TRUE LOVE IS HERE TO SEE ME, SO HOW COME I GOT KICKED OUT OF THE ROOM?
SOME THINGS ARE HARD TO FORGIVE, EVEN FROM A FUTURE BROTHER-IN-LAW.
WAIT, HE'S YOUNGER THAN ME, SO WHY SHOULD I RESPECT HIS WHIMS? THAT'S DUMB.
IS THIS THE SORT OF INCOMPREHENSIBLE CRAP THAT LEADS TO FAMILIES FALLING APART?
DAMMIT.
WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT IN THERE?
...MARCH 3RD.
SAKURAKO-SAN GAVE BIRTH TO TWINS A BIT EARLIER THAN HER EXPECTED DELIVERY DATE.

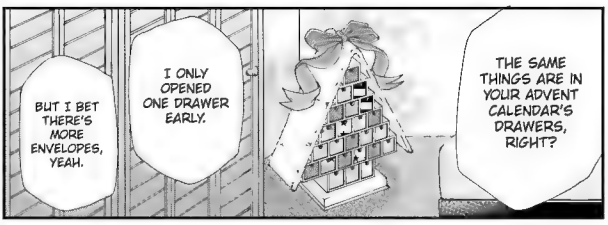

A GIRL AND A BOY. PERFECT LITTLE ANGELS.
MAY THE BLESSINGS OF THE FATHER, THE LOVE OF THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ALWAYS BE WITH THESE CHILDREN.


RINDOU.
YES.
YEAH. FROM THE DAY WE WERE BORN.
...A JOURNAL ENTRY?
...I THINK THIS IS GRAND-MOTHER'S HAND-WRITING.

WE CHECKED EACH OF THE DRAWERS.
THE ENVELOPES WERE PLACED IN RANDOM DATES.
THEY ARE ALL SEALED WITH ELAINE-SAMA'S SIGNET.

TUMBLE

WHO SENT THESE?
IT'S FROM HOME...
BUT WHO FROM HOME?
DAD HASN'T BEEN BACK TO JAPAN IN A WHILE, AND MOM SHOULD HAVE ALREADY LEFT THE COUNTRY.
WHO SENT THIS, AND FOR WHAT REASON?

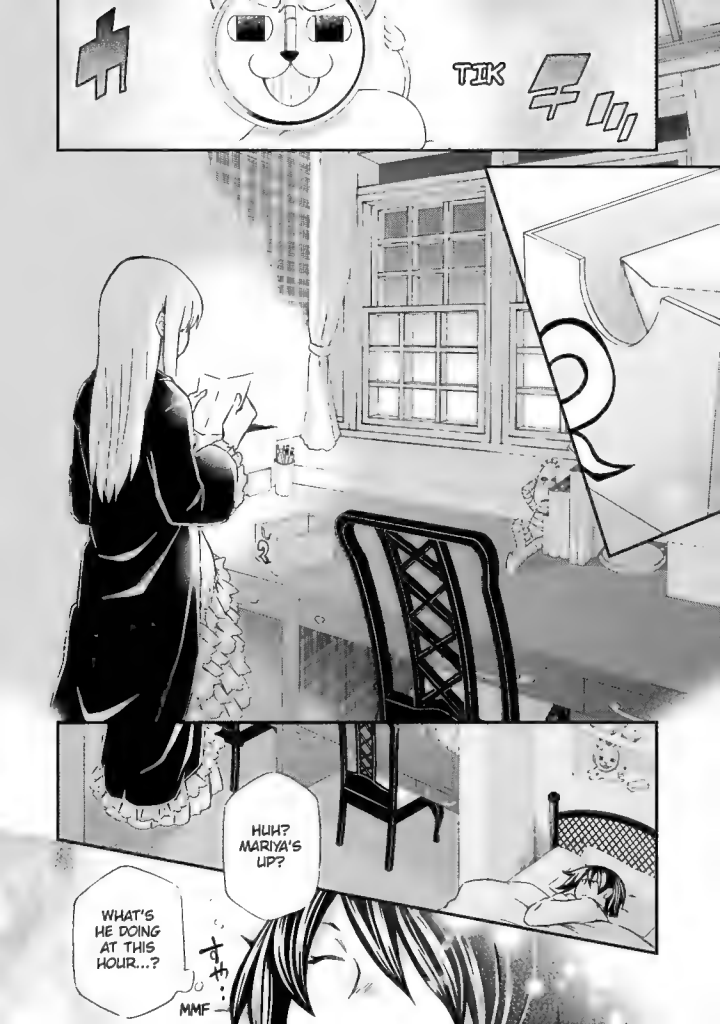

THE SAME THINGS ARE IN YOUR ADVENT CALENDAR'S DRAWERS, RIGHT?
I ONLY OPENED ONE DRAWER EARLY.
BUT I BET THERE'S MORE ENVELOPES, YEAH.

...WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
I WANT TO READ THEM.
...BUT I GET THE FEELING WE SHOULDN'T OPEN THEM RIGHT NOW.

RINDOU.
YOU MADE A NOTE OF WHICH DRAWER EACH ENVELOPE WAS PLACED IN, RIGHT?
NATURALLY.
I WOULD NEVER BE CAUGHT UNAWARES BY A CONSPIRACY.
CONSPIRACY, HUH...
PUT THEM ALL BACK INTO THEIR ORIGINAL DRAWERS.
OPENING ONLY ONE EACH DAY IS THE RULE OF THE ADVENT CALENDAR.

HUH?!
SHIZU-SAN, YOU'RE LEAVING ALREADY?!
YEAH.
SEE YOU LATER, KANA-CHAN.
BUT WE HAVEN'T TALKED AT ALL!
THERE'S CHRISTMAS TO THINK OF, AND THE NEW YEAR'S SHRINE VISIT, AND OUR FUTURE TOGETHER!!

YAY!
GRANDMA HERSELF?
WHO WOULD PLAY SUCH A DISGUSTFUL PRANK?
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. SHE'S BEEN DEAD FOR MORE THAN A YEAR.
AND HER SEAL.
GRAND-MA'S JOURNAL ...
SHE SEEMED SO ENERGETIC JUST HALF A YEAR AGO...
...MARIYA-SAMA.
I KNOW.


TAK
HUH? MARIYA'S UP?
WHAT'S HE DOING AT THIS HOUR...?
MMF

THE ADVENT CALENDAR, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST...
EACH DAY, ONE "WINDOW" IS OPENED, ENDING ON CHRISTMAS EVE.
INSIDE ARE SMALL GIFTS:
CHOCOLATE, CANDIES, CARDS...
...AND...

Prayer85
For a Long, Long Goodbye Part ②

MORNING, MARIYA!
WHAT'S THE TREAT OF THE DAY?
YOU KNOW, YOU SHOULDN'T BE MOOCHING FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S PRESENTS AS IF YOU'RE ENTITLED.
HEY, I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO GIVE IT TO ME!
I KNOW YOU'RE GETTING A DIFFERENT PRESENT EVERY DAY, SO I'M JUST CURIOUS!
FOR MY FUTURE REFERENCE.

TWO PEOPLE IN LOVE.
COUNTING DOWN TO CHRISTMAS...
A LITTLE SOMETHING TO SAY "I LOVE YOU" EVERY MORNING...
FUTURE REFERENCE ?

I GOT NO CLUE WHAT YOU'RE ON ABOUT.
IF YOU'D TOLD ME EARLIER, I COULD'VE MADE IT IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS!
HERE, LOOK.

YEAH.
THIS IS YOUR PRESENT FOR THE DAY?
A LOUPE?
I THINK IT PROBABLY BELONGED TO MY GRANDMA.

I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO REMIND ME OF MY MOTHER...
MIKIMIKI AND YUME BOTH HAVE KEEPSAKES. I'M THE ODD ONE OUT...
SO NOT FAIR.
SAY WHAT?
YOU HAVE SO MANY MEMENTOS OF YOUR GRANDMA! IT'S NOT FAIR.
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

WHAT?
YOU HAVE ONE, RIGHT THERE.
TIK TOK
カッ
コッ

THAT'S A LOVELY POCKET WATCH.
WE SISTERS DECIDED WE SHOULD GO PICK OUT SOMETHING WE WOULD USE IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES.
MIKI GOT HER WRISTWATCH, AND KANAKO HER ALARM CLOCK.
CLINK
OH!
THANKS.
THAT'S WONDERFUL!
IT WAS MY MOM'S.

NOD NOD
THIS IS MY MEMENTO OF MY MOTHER?
SERIOUSLY ?
THE SHOCKING TRUTH WAS REVEALED IN THE CRUDEST MANNER POSSIBLE...
...AND I FINISHED MY MAKEUP EXAMS...
ID
HUH?
WHAT'S MARIYA DOING UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AGAIN?

MMF MMF
AH, WHATEVER...
MARYA WAS ACTING THE TINIEST BIT WEIRD, BUT TIME MOVED ON...
DUDE! LOOK AT THIS CROWD!!
I KNOW, RIGHT?
EVERYONE'S BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS.

Oh yeah.
I THINK I VAGUELY REMEMBER THAT.
SO WHAT KIND OF EVENT IS IT?
TO THE CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN EVENT SACHI-SAN MENTIONED THE OTHER DAY.
UH, TO WHAT?

WELL...
PERHAPS THE EASIEST WAY FOR HER TO UNDERSTAND IT WOULD BE TO PARTICIPATE, MOMOI-SAN.
invitation
WHERE MAIDENS FAIR
聖なる祈りを捧げる場所
CLASPING HANDS IN HOLY PRAYER
麗しきソノたちよ
その祭壇
YEAH! LOOK AT THE BULLETIN BOARD, KANAKO-CHAN.
"CLASPING HANDS IN HOLY PRAYER"... "ALTAR"...
WAZZAT? A RIDDLE?
KNEEL BEFORE THE ALTAR
YEAH! IT'S A RIDDLE!
YOU SOLVE THE RIDDLE TO FIGURE OUT THE "WHERE," AAAND...

WHOA! LOOK AT THAT LINE!!
...IT LEADS YOU TO THE PARTICIPATION PACKET, LIKE THIS!

OH HO...
IT SAYS, "TAKE BACK THE SYMBOL OF AME NO KISAKI!"
"TAKE BACK THE SYMBOL OF AME NO KISAKI!"
18
...AND AN ANSWER SHEET.
INSIDE, THERE'S ONE ENVELOPE FOR EACH DAY...
...AN INSTRUCTION SHEET...

KANAKO-CHAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WE CAN JUST OPEN THEM EARLY, RIGHT?
NOOO! I MEAN YOU CAN, BUT YOU CAN'T!!
UH-HUH!
EACH ONE HAS A RIDDLE OR A CLUE INSIDE, SO YOU-
SO THE NUMBER ON EACH ENVELOPE IS THE DATE, OR THE ORDER IN WHICH WE'RE SUPPOSED TO OPEN THEM?
RRRRRIP
GOTCHA.
MEEP!!
THE POINT IS TO COUNT DOWN THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS...
...KNOWING YOU'LL HAVE A LITTLE MERRIMENT TO LOOK FORWARD TO EACH DAY.

IS THIS WHY I CAN'T GET A GIRL-FRIEND?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND! I DON'T UNDERSTAND WOMEN!
SO YOU CAN'T OPEN THEM UNTIL THE RIGHT DAY, OKAY?!

THERE'S RIDDLES IN THESE, RIGHT?
WOULDN'T MORE TIME TO MULL IT OVER GIVE YOU AN ADVANTAGE?
HOW DARE YOU! I DON'T READ MYSTERY NOVELS IN THE FIRST PLACE!
OH YEAH. MY BAD.
I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU READING AN ACTUAL BOOK BEFORE.
YOU'RE THE KIND OF PERSON WHO READS THE LAST PAGE OF A MYSTERY NOVEL FIRST, AREN'T YOU?
YOU DIDN'T EVEN READ THE INSTRUCTIONS, DID YOU?

TAKE BACK THE SYMBOL OF AME NO KISAKI!
"PLEASE OPEN ONE INVITATION PER DAY."
"A LITTLE PRESENT WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU AT THE MEETING PLACE EACH DAY OF THE WEEK LEADING UP TO CHRISTMAS."
"COLLECT ALL OF THE GIFTS AND TAKE BACK THE SYMBOL OF AME NO KISAKI, AND SURELY, PROOF OF YOUR HONOR WILL BE BESTOWED UPON YOU."
HOW'D YOU KNOW?
HEY!
YOINK
...IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FILL IN THE ANSWER SHEET UNLESS YOU ACTUALLY MOVE YOUR BUTT TO THE RIGHT PLACE ON EACH SPECIFIC DATE.
TAKE BACK THE SYMBOL OF AME NO KISAKI!
WHAT THE HECK? IF IT TAKES A WHOLE WEEK, YOU'LL FORGET THE FIRST RIDDLE BY THE END!
YOU'RE KILLING ME HERE! WHAT A HASSLE!
YOU HAVE ZERO PATIENCE.
I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS TO BE SUCH A PAIN IN THE BUTT.
IS YOUR THING LIKE THAT, TOO?
HUH?

YOUR ADVENT CALENDAR.
LIKE HOW YOU'LL KNOW THE ANSWER ONCE YOU OPEN THEM ALL UP.
I'M GONNA GO WASH UP.
YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW.
KEEP YOURSELF AWAY FROM THE BIG BATH.
HUH? WHEN DID IT GET THIS LATE?

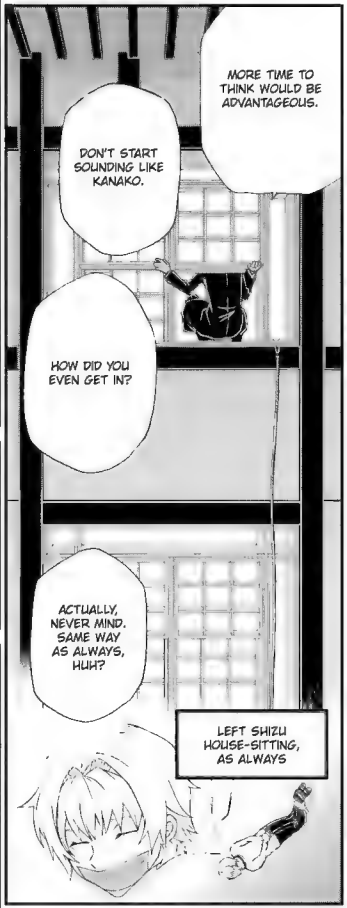
...WHAT DO YOU THINK?
FLOODING THE BATH WITH BLOOD IS NO TRIVIAL FEAT. WITH KANAKO-SAMA'S HEALTH ON THE LINE AS WELL, IT SIMPLY CANNOT BE HELPED.
UGH, NOT THAT.
EVER SINCE HER FIRST TIME IN THE BIG BATH RESULTED IN HER NOSEBLEED TURNING THE BATHWATER INTO A SEA OF BLOOD...
...SHE'S BEEN OBLIGED TO USE THE SHOWER STALLS ONLY.
'TIS NOT THE SEASON FOR SHOWERING ONLY. IT'S COLD!
SPURT
I WANNA USE THE BIG BATH, TOOOO...
CLOSE ENOUGH TO LOCK LIMBS, BARE SKIN AGAINST BARE SKIN...
WHOOPS. GOTTA CALM DOWN.
IF YOU MEAN THE ADVENT CALENDAR... IF EVEN KANAKO-SAMA COULD COME TO THAT CONCLUSION, PERHAPS IT IS THE MOST OBVIOUS ONE.
YEAH.
HECK, EVEN KANAKO THOUGHT OF IT.

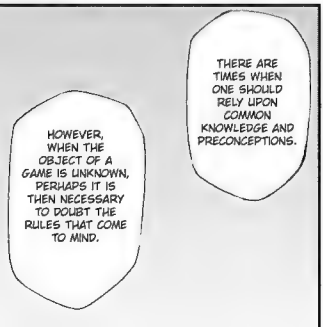
THE NUMBERS ARE WEIRDLY DISTORTED TO LOOK LIKE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET, I THINK...
3 IS M.
7 IS Z... OR IS IT S?
THE ENTRIES FROM GRANDMA'S JOURNAL ARE THE KEY TO DECIPHERING THE CODE...

GACK!!!
HUP
SHALL WE GO ALL IN AND OPEN THEM ALL AT ONCE?

BUT WILL THERE BE MORE TO IT...?
SHOULD BE SAFE TO SAY THAT'S CORRECT.
AND YOU'LL HAVE TO CONFIRM WHICH GIFTS YOU BOTH RECEIVED TO FIND YOUR WAY TO THE ANSWER...
KLAK

LOOK, RINDOU...
I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE, BUT WITH ADVENT CALENDARS, THE TRADITION IS TO-
DID IT COME WITH INSTRUCTIONS?


MORE TIME TO THINK WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS.
DON'T START SOUNDING LIKE KANAKO.
HOW DID YOU EVEN GET IN?
ACTUALLY, NEVER MIND. SAME WAY AS ALWAYS, HUH?
LEFT SHIZU HOUSE-SITTING, AS ALWAYS


THERE ARE TIMES WHEN ONE SHOULD RELY UPON COMMON KNOWLEDGE AND PRECONCEPTIONS.
HOWEVER, WHEN THE OBJECT OF A GAME IS UNKNOWN, PERHAPS IT IS THEN NECESSARY TO DOUBT THE RULES THAT COME TO MIND.

A SUSPICIOUS GIFT, BOTH PURPOSE AND SENDER UNKNOWN.
MOREOVER, IT FEELS AS THOUGH IT IS MEANT TO HAVE A DISTINCT MESSAGE...
IF IT TRULY IS A GAME, IT'S MOST LIKELY MADE SUCH THAT ITS "CREATOR" WAS THE ADVANTAGE.
YEAH.
...HEY, MATSURIKA.
RINDOU'S LOGIC MAKES ACTUAL SENSE FOR ONCE.
MY APOLOGIES. I'LL SCOLD HIM SEVERELY LATELY.
NO, NO, IT'S A GOOD THING. IT'S JUST FREAKING ME OUT.

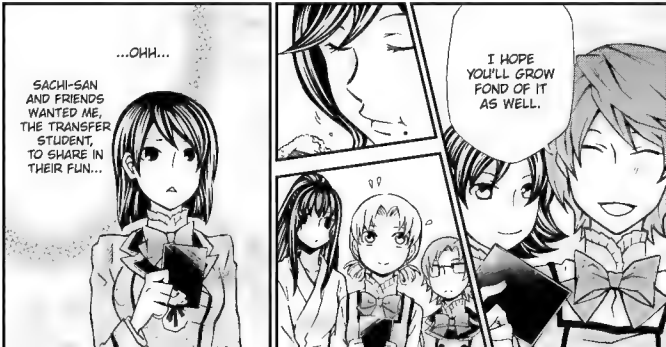
BUT HOWEVER STUPID OR IMPOSSIBLE A GAME IT IS, PLAYING AT YOUR BEST WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE RULES...
...AND WINNING...
...IS A PLAYER'S HONOR.

Morning!
IT'S THE SAME KIND OF RIDDLE AS THE ONE ON THE BULLETIN BOARD YESTERDAY.
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SOLVE THE RIDDLE AND HEAD FOR THE NURSE'S OFFICE.
KIRI-SAN. YOU JUST GAVE AWAY THE ANSWER.
I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO THINK.
AND TODAY'S CLUE THING IIIS... THIS.
invitation
WHITE TONES, WHITE LINEN
FRAGRANCE OF MEDICINES
DRIFTING WITHIN
A GODDESS ADORNED IN
WHITE ROBES
UPON YOU A GIFT BESTOWS
IT'S NOT AGAINST THE RULES TO WORK TOGETHER!
YOU DON'T EVEN NEED TO KNOW THE ANSWER. YOU COULD JUST FOLLOW EVERYBODY ELSE...
THEY MUST ALL BE STUDENTS HERE TO GET THE PRESENT BEFORE SHORT HOME ROOM.
DUDE! WHAT'S WITH THIS LINE?!

GOOD MORNING, NURSE TONOMURA!
UH-HUH! G'MORNING.
TAKE ONE EACH, OKAY?
LET'S SEE WHAT'S INSIDE... A TREAT?
IS THAT A MACARON?
OKAY, LET'S FILL THAT IN ON THE ANSWER KEY.
RO
NO
A
SHI
TSU
KA

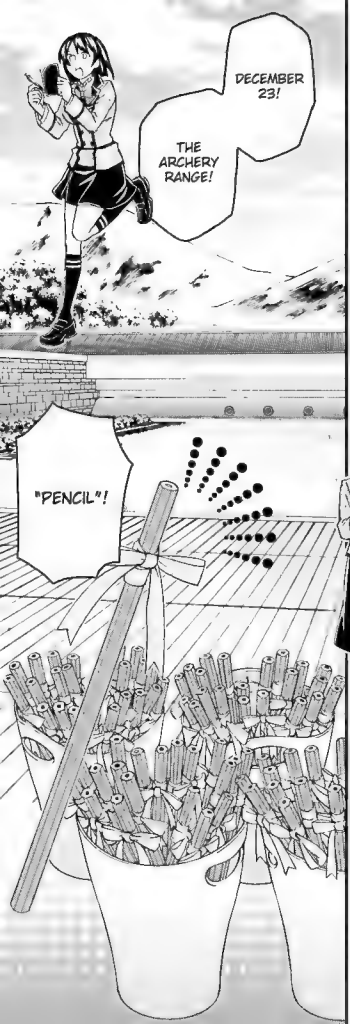
HUH.
SO WE KEEP DOING THIS ALL WEEK?
YEAH! ISN'T IT EXCITING?
IS IT, THOUGH?
YEAH... SURE.
IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A PAIN IN THE BUTT. WHY WOULD EVERYBODY LOOK FORWARD TO THIS?
ALL OF US STUDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE ADVENT EVENT.
ALTHOUGH NO ONE HAS TO IF THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE IT, OF COURSE.
RYUKEN-SAMA. SATSUKI-SENPAI.
USUALLY SCHOOL EVENTS MEAN A LOT OF WORK FOR THE STUDENT COUNCIL AND CLASS REPRESENTATIVES AND SUCH, RIGHT?
YOU'RE A CLASS REPRESENTATIVE, MIYAMAE-SAN, SO I THINK YOU REALIZE THAT.
BUT FOR THE ADVENT, COMING UP WITH THE PUZZLES, SETTING UP THE TABLES, AND PRESENTS, AND SO ON...
THE TEACHERS HANDLE ALL OF THE HARD WORK.
MUNCH MUNCH
THAT'S RIGHT! WE'RE WORKING OUR BUTTS OFF!

ON A BLESSED DAY CENTERED ON SHOWING ONE'S LOVE FOR GOD AND FAMILY...
A FORMER CHAIRMAN PROPOSED A SCHOOL TRADITION THAT ALL STUDENTS COULD ENJOY EQUALLY, AND THE TEACHERS AGREED TO HELP...
EVEN THOUGH THE STAFF IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT NOW, THEIR FEELINGS CONTINUE ON EVERY YEAR DURING AME NO KISAKI'S ADVENT TRADITION...

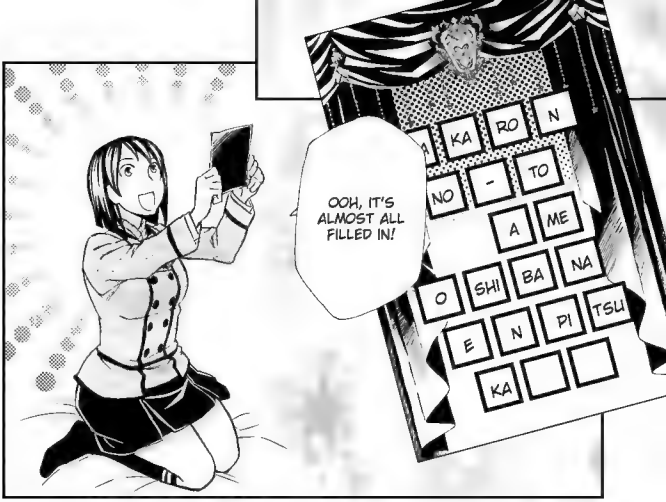

...OHH...
SACHI-SAN AND FRIENDS WANTED ME, THE TRANSFER STUDENT, TO SHARE IN THEIR FUN...
I HOPE YOU'LL GROW FOND OF IT AS WELL.

invitation
19
IT'S A NEW DAY!!
LET'S GET 'ER DONE!
DECEMBER 19!
WHERE? THE CEREMONY HALL!
BAM
I'M SOOO GLAD I CAME TO AME NO KISAKI.
SO GLAD I BECAME FRIENDS WITH THESE GUYS...
...AND CAN SPEND ADVENT WITH THEM!
HRR HRR
I'M GETTING ALL WORKED UP NOW TOO!
AWESOME!!
LET'S GET OUR GIFTS TOGETHER TOMORROW TOO!!
WHAT? A NOTEBOOK!
A LIMITED EDITION ITEM WITH THE CREST OF AME NO KISAKI ON THE COVER!!
BUH-BAM

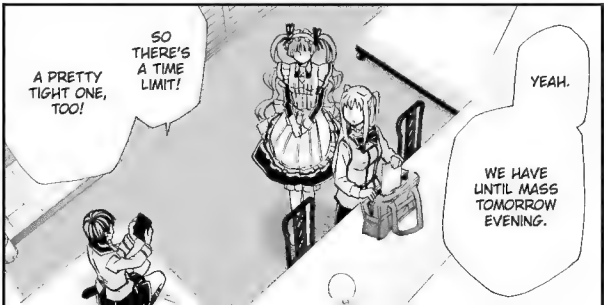
DECEMBER 20!
THE INVITATION POINTS TO THE FACULTY OFFICE!
FACULTY
OOH, CUTE!
"AME" CANDIES!!
DECEMBER 21!
THE HOME EC KITCHEN!
A BOOKMARK? NO, WE NEED FOUR JAPANESE CHARACTERS.
"O-SHI-BA-NA"!! PRESSED FLOWERS!

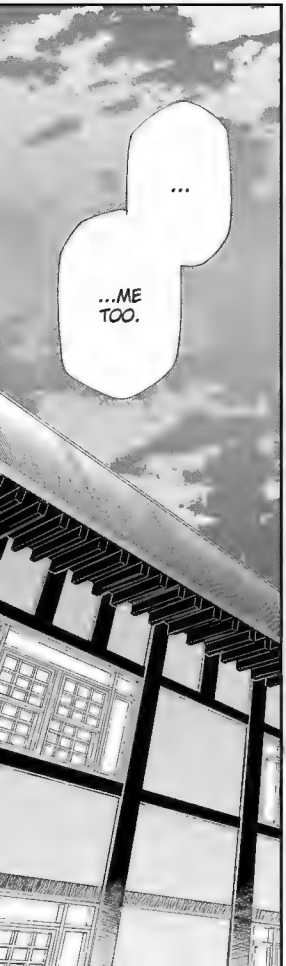

DECEMBER 23!
THE ARCHERY RANGE!
"PENCIL"!

DECEMBER 22!
THE CAFETERIA!
"COOKIE"!


OOH, IT'S ALMOST ALL FILLED IN!
KA
RO
N
NO
-
TO
A
ME
O
SHI
BA
NA
E
N
PI
TSU
KA

THE THING ABOUT TAKING BACK AME NO KISAKI'S STOLEN SYMBOL OR WHATSIT.
ONE MORE WORD AND WE CAN SOLVE THE BIG RIDDLE, RIGHT?


A PRETTY TIGHT ONE, TOO!
SO THERE'S A TIME LIMIT!
YEAH.
WE HAVE UNTIL MASS TOMORROW EVENING.


...
...ME TOO.

OOH, THAT'S TOUGH. I HOPE IT'S AN EASY ANSWER.
BUT IF IT WAS TOO EASY, THAT'D BE A LETDOWN, HUH?
WHO KNOWS HOW HARD IT'LL BE? THE TEAM OF TEACHERS WHO ORGANIZES IT CHANGES EVERY YEAR, SO THE DIFFICULTY IS ALL OVER THE PLACE.
DON'T THEY BETA TEST THIS STUFF?

IT WOULD STILL BE FUN IF SOMEONE TOLD ME THE ANSWER, OR GAVE ME A HINT...
MMF
...BUT HECK, IF I'M GONNA DO IT, I WANNA FIGURE IT OUT MYSELF!

I CAN'T WAIT FOR TOMORROW!

DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
THE MORNING OF THE 24TH IS FINALLY UPON US.
24
HUH?

WHAT'S THIS?
A CHRISTMAS CARD?
CHRISTMAS

MARIA HOLIC 3

Prayer86
For a Long, Long Goodbye Part ③

Prayer86
For a Long, Long Goodbye Part ③

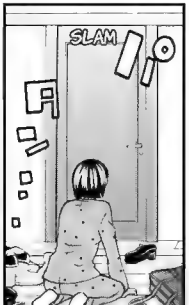
HMMM...
SO "CARD" SHOULD BE THE LAST ANSWER, RIGHT?
24

KA-CHAK
GOOD MORNING.
"COLLECT ALL OF THE GIFTS AND TAKE BACK THE SYMBOL OF AME NO KISAKI, AND SURELY, PROOF OF YOUR HONOR WILL BE BESTOWED UPON YOU."
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
I THINK THAT WAS IT?
...I HAVE ALL THE CLUE WORDS, SO NOW WHAT?
SHIZU-SAN!

SHOVE
HEY!
GOOD MORNING, HONEY! I MISSED YOU SO!
EH?!
BWOOSH
MERRY CHRISTMA...

HAVE A GOOD DAY.
HEEEY, WHAT GIVES?!
YOU TELLING ME TO GO TO CLASS LIKE THIS?!
SCREW YOU!!

TOSS
TOSS
TOSS

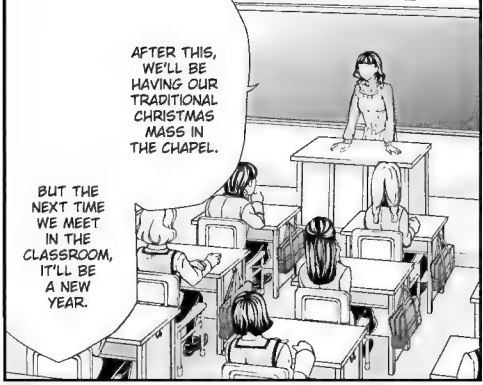

SLAM

AH!!
I HADN'T FIGURED OUT THE PUZZLE YET...
GOD!

...happening here?
What's...
IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY, PART OF THE SEAL IS MISSING.
THE SCHOOL SEAL ON THE ANSWER SHEET...
FATHER KANAE'S NAME?!
MERRY CHRISTMAS
KA
NA
E
...TO "TAKE BACK" AME NO KISAKI'S SEAL, AND...
OVERLAP THE MISSING PARTS OF THE CHRISTMAS CARD WITH THE ANSWER SHEET...
Correct Seal
MA
KA
RO

KEYCHAINS!
HEY, THEY HAVE THE YEAR ON THEM!
THIS IS THE YEAR KANAKO-CHAN CAME TO AME NO KISAKI...
...AND THE YEAR WE BECAME FRIENDS WITH NANAMI-CHAN!

...IS SOLVED!!
THE ADVENT PUZZLE...
I DON'T CARRY A BAG, SO I'LL PUT IT ON MY QUIVER.
YEAH, OF COURSE!
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MOMOI-SAN? EVERYONE ELSE?
ME, TOO.
I'M GONNA PUT IT ON MY BAG!
TEDDYBEAR-SENSEI, DID YOU GET A BOYFRIEND IN TIME FOR A CHRISTMAS DATE?
OOH, ME!
CUT THAT OUT!
...AND THAT CONCLLUDES THE FINAL LONG HOME-ROOM OF THE SECOND SEMESTER.
ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?
ATTENDANCE BOOK
I CONCUR!
LOTS OF STUDENTS ARE WORRYING OVER HOW THEY SHOULD ASK THEIR CRUSHES OUT.
THEY SAY THAT CONFESSING YOUR LOVE ON A CHRISTMAS DATE MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE A 70% CHANCE OF SUCCESS.
I CONCUR!


AFTER THIS, WE'LL BE HAVING OUR TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS MASS IN THE CHAPEL.
BUT THE NEXT TIME WE MEET IN THE CLASSROOM, IT'LL BE A NEW YEAR.

UMM, ISN'T AGREEING TO A CHRISTMAS DATE IN THE FIRST PLACE THE SAME AS AGREEING TO BE A COUPLE?
WELL, ANYWAY.

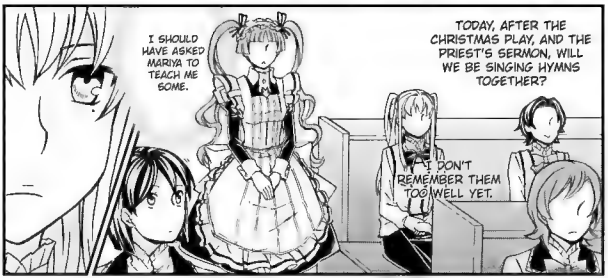
I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOUR BRIGHT FACES NEXT YEAR.

Q. HOW ARE YOU SPENDING CHRISTMAS?

OHH, NATSURU!
I TOLD YOU TO STOP CALLING ME THAT!
AFTER MASS, I'M VOLUNTEERING AT A CHARITY BAZAAR...
WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTERWARD, AYARIN?
I HAVE PLANS TO GO TO THE MOVIES.
HUH? A BOYFRIEND?
NO, NO! WITH MY LITTLE BROTHER.
AFTER THAT, WE'RE GOING TO A FAMILY DINNER.
I DON'T HAVE ANY SPECIAL PLANS, SO I'M THINKING I'LL BAKE A CHRISTMAS CAKE FOR THE EMPLOYEES AT MY FAMILY'S SUSHI RESTAURANT.
I'M PRETTY GOOD AT BAKING, YOU KNOW?
THOUGH THEY WON'T LET ME TOUCH THE SUSHI.
OOK, OOK!!
YES!!
I'M GONNA SEE RYUKEN!!
GIRLS' NIGHTS OUT?
IS HE REALLY THE RIGHT MAN FOR ME...?
THIS WILL BE MY LAST CHRISTMAS AS AN UNMARRIED WOMAN...

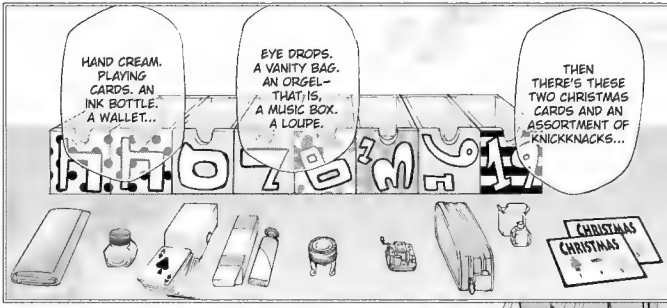
"WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON CHRISTMAS?"
ME? I...
I WAS GONNA ASK SHIZU-SAN ON A DATE, BUT I DIDN'T GET A SINGLE CHANCE.
WHENEVER SHE CAME TO THE DORM, MARIYA WOULDN'T LET ME IN THE ROOM, AND THEN SHE WENT STRAIGHT HOME.
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE MESSAGED HER TO ARRANGE SOMETHING IN ADVANCE.
WHAT IF SHE ALREADY MADE PLANS?
WHEN SHOULD I GIVE HER THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT?
WILL SHE LIKE IT?
...ACTUALLY, I HAVE PRESENTS FOR MARIYA AND MATSURIKA-SAN, TOO.
I GUESS I DON'T HAVE TO GIVE THEM THEIR GIFTS, THOUGH.
I bet they didn't get me anything anyway
DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
I'M ATTENDING MY FIRST CHRISTMAS MASS SINCE COMING TO AME NO KISAKI.

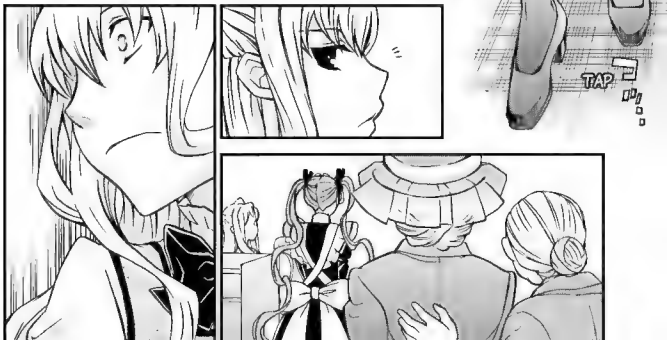
I HAVEN'T BEEN TO CHRISTMAS MASS SINCE WE WENT AS A FAMILY WHEN I WAS LITTLE.
TAKES ME BACK...
...NOT THAT I REMEMBER WHAT ALL HAPPENED. BUT MOM WAS STILL WITH US BACK THEN.
IT'S A GOOD MEMORY.


I SHOULD HAVE ASKED MARIYA TO TEACH ME SOME.
TODAY, AFTER THE CHRISTMAS PLAY, AND THE PRIEST'S SERMON, WILL WE BE SINGING HYMNS TOGETHER?
I DON'T REMEMBER THEM TOO WELL YET.

"12 P.M. CHAPEL."
9 OZEN 12 ZIOMIDO
9 OZEN 12 ZIOMIDO

BECAUSE THAT ENVELOPE WAS PLACED IN THE DRAWER UPSIDE-DOWN.
WHY IS THE DRAWER FOR THE 20TH THE ONLY ONE UPSIDE-DOWN?
I SEE.
It is telling us to draw up.
...I THINK.
YOU LINED THEM UP IN ORDER OF THE DATES FROM GRANDMOTHER'S JOURNAL ENTRIES.


HAND CREAM. PLAYING CARDS. AN INK BOTTLE. A WALLET...
EYE DROPS. A VANITY BAG. AN ORGEL- THAT IS, A MUSIC BOX. A LOUPE.
THEN THERE'S THESE TWO CHRISTMAS CARDS AND AN ASSORTMENT OF KNICKKNACKS...
CHRISTMAS
CHRISTMAS


TAP

AH...
NOTHING ...
MARIYA-CHAN? WHAT'S WRONG?
CLICK
...
ARE YOU FREE TOMORROW?
ISHIMA-SENPAI!

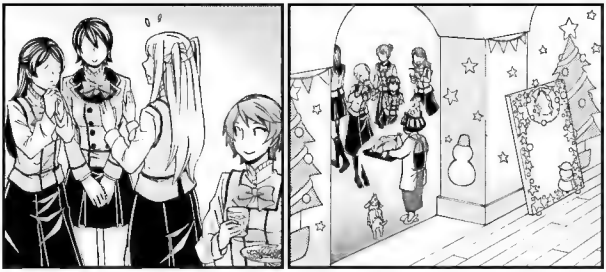
I THINK SHE'LL SPEND THE DAY WITH FAMILY AT HOME?
MARIYA'S CHRISTMAS PLANS?
DO YOU KNOW SHIDOU-SAN'S PLANS FOR TOMORROW?
Not that she said anything...
YUP, RYUKEN-SAMA'S GOT A LINE OF GIRLS AFTER HER.
NO! WITH US!
WON'T YOU PLEASE GO ON A DATE WITH ME?
EXCUSE ME! MIYAMAE-SAN!

WHAT?!
JUST TO BE SURE, YOU AREN'T IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH MARIYA-SAN, RIGHT?
MAYBE WE STILL HAVE A CHANCE, THEN?

HUH?
WHO WOULD MESSAGE ME THIS LATE?
WHAT?! WHERE'D YOU GET THAT IDEA?!
YOU HAVE A DATE WITH THE VICE-PRESIDENT FROM MIHOSHI NO MORI AFTER ALL, THEN?
OH, RIGHT.
DON'T EVEN JOKE LIKE THAT! I'M SPOKEN FOR BY SHIZU-SA...

OH HELL NO!!
SMASH
"MERRY CHRISTMAS."
"IT WOULD BE HEAVENLY IF YOU WOULD JOIN ME ON A DATE TOMORROW."
AAAARGH!! MY PHONE GOT BROOOKE!!
SHOULDN'T SHE BE SAYING THAT SHE BROKE IT?
PSH
HOW IS THIS HAPPENING ?
I HADN'T EVEN TYPED IN MY MESSAGE ASKING SHIZU-SAN OUT YET, AND NOW I HAVE NO WAY OF CONTACTING HER...
SLUMP
TRAGEDY HAS STRUCK!
THIS CHRISTMAS ...
...WILL TEST THE STRENGTH OF MY LOVE!!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



NO, NO.
I THOUGHT I JUST SAW SANTA...
RYU-CHAN-SENPAI, IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

HMM?

IT'S CHRISTMAS! OF COURSE THERE'LL BE SOME SANTAS AROUND!
CHEERS!
TAP
TAP
TAP
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S CHRISTMAS, AFTER ALL.
CHEERS.
TAP
MERRY CHRISTMAS.
A CHRISTMAS PRESENT?
YEAH, FROM SHIZU TO KANAKO.
SHIZU GETS SOME STRANGE WHIMS... OR SHE'S JUST TOO SOFTHEARTED ...
YOU DID NOT GET HER ANYTHING, MARIYA-SAMA?
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MATSURIKA?

WHEEERE DOOO YOOOUUU...
...THIIINK YOOUUU'RE GOOIIING?
...SHALL WE BE ON OUR WAY?
YEAH.
THERE'S STILL PLENTY OF TIME UNTIL MIDNIGHT, BUT IT'S ALWAYS BEST TO LEAVE EARLY.

DO YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO GO OOOUUUT? YOU DON'T, DO YOOOU?
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIIIGHT?
W-WE WERE ON OUR WAY BACK TO THE MANOR.
FLINCH

I'M SORRY.
WE'RE IN A HURRY. I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.
Oooh?
FORCING YOUR WAY OOOUT?
NOT WHILE GOD IS AROUUUND.
IT'S TIME FOR GOOD LITTLE GIRLS TO BE IN BEEEEED!
AAAAAUUUU GGGHHHH!
...AAA...
...AAA...

I KNOW. I'M JUST IMPATIENT.
IS IT NOT A TAD EARLY TO HEAD TO THE CHAPEL?
I UNDERSTAND.
I FEEL BETTER WITH YOU ACTING LIKE ALWAYS-
?
IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO ARRIVE EARLY AND CASE THE AREA FOR ENEMIES.
PLEASE GO ON A DATE WITH ME TOMORROW, THEN ASK ME OUT AND GO OUT WITH ME!
ISN'T THIS ALREADY YOU ASKING ME OUT?
HUH? UM...
PLEASE GO OUT WITH ME TOMORROW!!!
SHIDOU SHIZU-KUN!

I'M KIND OF BUSY RIGHT NOW. COULD WE TALK ABOUT THIS TOMORROW?
NO, I DIDN'T MEAN...
UM, LOOK, THIS IS KIND OF PROBLEMATIC FOR ME...
WHAT DO I DO?
SO YOU'RE OKAY WITH THE DATE?!
PROBLEMATIC? HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT!
WE MAY HAVE LEFT EARLY...
...BUT I STILL DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS--
?!
SANTA?!
SANTA?! WHY?!
I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE SANTA, YOU CAN'T STEAL SHIZU-KUN AWAY!
AFTER THEM!!
GET BACK HERE!
WAIT, YOU! GOD! WAAAIT!

TEE-HEE! SEE, I'M SANTA, HERE TO GIVE YOU THE GIFT OF L-O-V-E!
DO YOU LIKE MY OUTFIT?
OH!
LOOK, I'M IN A HURRY, SO...
I THINK WE LOST THEM.
THANKS, KANA-CHAN.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

UM, IS THIS GOING TO BE A LONG STORY?
BUT! SUCH A TRIFLING OBSTACLE CANNOT STOP YOUR KANAKO'S LOVE!
CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND MY CONTROL SEVERED MY COMMUNICATION CHANNEL WITH YOU.

HUH?!
DASH
I'M SORRY!
BUT WAIT! WHAT IF I WAS SANTA?
WHAT IF THE POLICE GOT CALLED ON ME?
BUT WHAT IF I ENDED UP GETTING TAKEN CAPTIVE LIKE BEFORE?
I WAS GOING TO BARGE INTO THE MANOR AND ASK YOU ABOUT TOMORROW IN PERSON.
SO BASICALLY, ABOUT THAT DATE TOMORROW-

WAIT ...!
WAIT, COME BACK, SHIZU-SAN!
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
"I'M SORRY" ?
GASP
SHIT, LOOK AT THE TIME!!!
ONLY TEN MINUTES UNTIL MIDNIGHT!!
I FEEL LIKE I JUST WOKE UP FROM A BAD DREAM...
OH YEAH. WE RAN INTO THE HOUSE MOTHER AND...
UGH. JUST TRYING TO REMEMBER IS KILLING MY HEAD...
THROB
HEY! MATSURIKA! THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO BE SLEEPING UNDER A CUTE COMFORTER!
NYUM NYUM... BURIED TREASURE... THUNK, THUNK...
GREEDY SLEEP-TALKING FOR A NIGHT OF GIVING!!

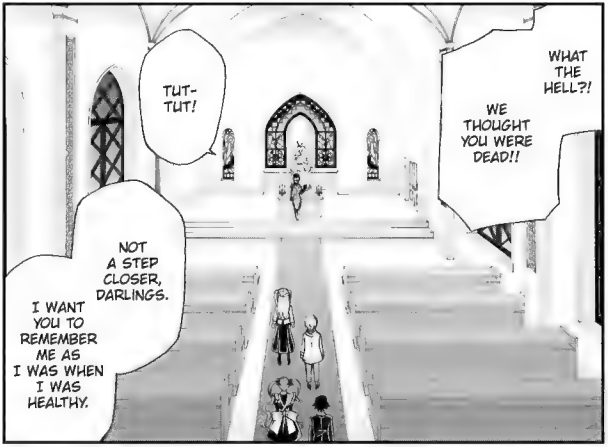
KLAK
I NEED ANOTHER WAY OUT...
I CAN PROBABLY MAKE IT IN TIME IF I HURRY, BUT THE HOUSE MOTHER COULD STILL BE OUT IN THE HALLWAY.
WHAT NOW?
GOODNESS.
YOU STILL HAVEN'T LEFT AT THIS HOUR, MARIYA-SAMA?
AAHH!!
FINALLY!!
YOU WEREN'T ANSWERING YOUR PHONE! I THOUGHT SOME-THING HAPPENED!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW WORRIED I WAS?!
SORRY.
I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.

YOU GOT A LOCK PICK?
IT'S LOCKED.
OF COURSE NOT.
NOW THEN.
IT'S FINALLY TIME.
23:59
SHALL I BREAK A WINDOW?
IDIOT.
THE NIGHT GUARD WILL COME RUNNING IF THEY HEAR ANY LOUD NOISES.
UM, NII-SAMA?
THE CHRISTMAS CARD...
ALL OF THE PICTURES ON IT ARE NOUNS CONNECTED TO "CHRISTMAS."
AND IF YOU USE THE NUMBER UNDER EACH PICTURE TO PICK OUT ONE LETTER FROM EACH WORD...
1 tree
4 cake
5 candle
T-E-L.
SO IT'S A HINT TO CALL?
CHRISTMAS
I SEE IT NOW.
A CHRISTMAS TREE, A CHRISTMAS CAKE, AND A CHRISTMAS CANDLE.
CALL WHO?
IT COULD ONLY BE ONE PERSON, DUH.
RING A-LING SING A-LING

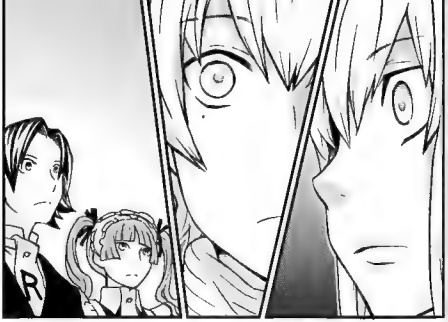
RING A-LING JING A-LING
A CHRISTMAS SONG...
RING A-LING JING A-LING
...RING-TONE?
RING A-LING JING A-LING
IT'S COMING FROM INSIDE THE CHAPEL.
CREAK
BOOP
RING A-LING JING A-LING

MERRY...
...CHRISTMAS.

GRANDMA !!
GRAND-MOTHER !!


WHAT THE HELL?!
WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!!
TUT-TUT!
NOT A STEP CLOSER, DARLINGS.
I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER ME AS I WAS WHEN I WAS HEALTHY.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
OH, WHATEVER. YOU CAN GIVE US YOUR EXCUSE LATER.
...I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
AS AM I.



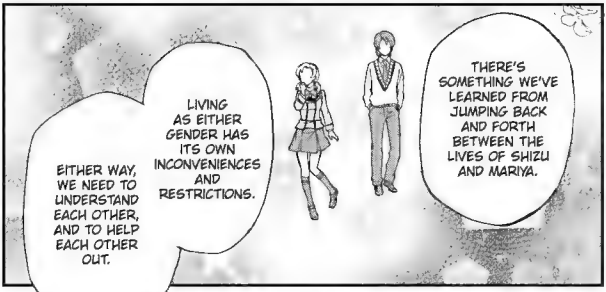
BUT I'M SORRY, DEARS.

I DON'T HAVE LONG LEFT.

I WAS ALWAYS A SLIM WOMAN, BUT MY LIMBS ARE AS THIN AS TREE BRANCHES NOW.
MY EYES ARE SUNKEN, MY CHEEKS BONEY AND DRY...
MY BREASTS SHRUNK THREE CUP SIZES, TOO. CHOOSING UNDERGARMENTS HAS GOTTEN PROBLEMATIC.
IT'S A MIRACLE I'M STANDING HERE BREATHING BEFORE YOU.

...THAT'S WHY YOU FAKED YOUR DEATH AND ADDED THE CONTEST TO YOUR WILL?
YES.
SAKURAKO-SAN CHEWED ME OUT!
SELFISH THIS, INCONSIDERATE THAT.
UH, NO DUH?
WHEN MY ILLNESS WAS DIAGNOSED AND THE DOCTORS TOLD ME HOW LONG I HAD LEFT ON THIS EARTH, THE FIRST THING I THOUGHT OF WAS YOU TWO AND YOUR LITTLE GAME OF SWITCHEROO.
I WANTED TO HAVE YOU SETTLE ON YOUR IDENTITIES.
...AND I WANTED TO SEE IT THROUGH MYSELF.
SO, I HAD SOMETHING TO TELL YOU TWO BEFORE I'M GONE.
FORGET ABOUT THE CONTEST. YOU CAN GO BACK TO YOUR OWN LIVES. SHIZU AS SHIZU, MARIYA AS MARIYA.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE OVER AME NO KISAKI OR MIHOSHI NO MORI.
I WANT YOU TO LIVE WHATEVER LIFE SUITS YOU.

LISTEN, GRANDMA.


THERE'S SOMETHING WE'VE LEARNED FROM JUMPING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE LIVES OF SHIZU AND MARIYA.
LIVING AS EITHER GENDER HAS ITS OWN INCONVENIENCES AND RESTRICTIONS.
EITHER WAY, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, AND TO HELP EACH OTHER OUT.

AND IF YOU CAN SEE OTHER PEOPLE'S FEELINGS...
...NOT AS SUPERIOR OR INFERIOR TO YOURS, BUT AS SIMPLY PART OF WHAT MAKES THEM AN INDIVIDUAL...

BEING A MAN, BEING A WOMAN... BOTH ARE PRICELESS...
...AND PRECIOUS.
...THAT'S WHAT WE THINK.
YOU SEE, GRAND-MOTHER...
WE'VE GROWN QUITE FOND OF OUR CURRENT LIVES.
...AND REGARDLESS OF OUR PERSONAL FEELINGS, THERE'S A LOT TO LEARN FROM IT.
THAT'S WHY, REGARDLESS OF THE CONTEST, WE WANT TO SEE THIS THROUGH.
WE CAN DEAL WITH ANY CONSEQUENCES WHEN THEY COME.

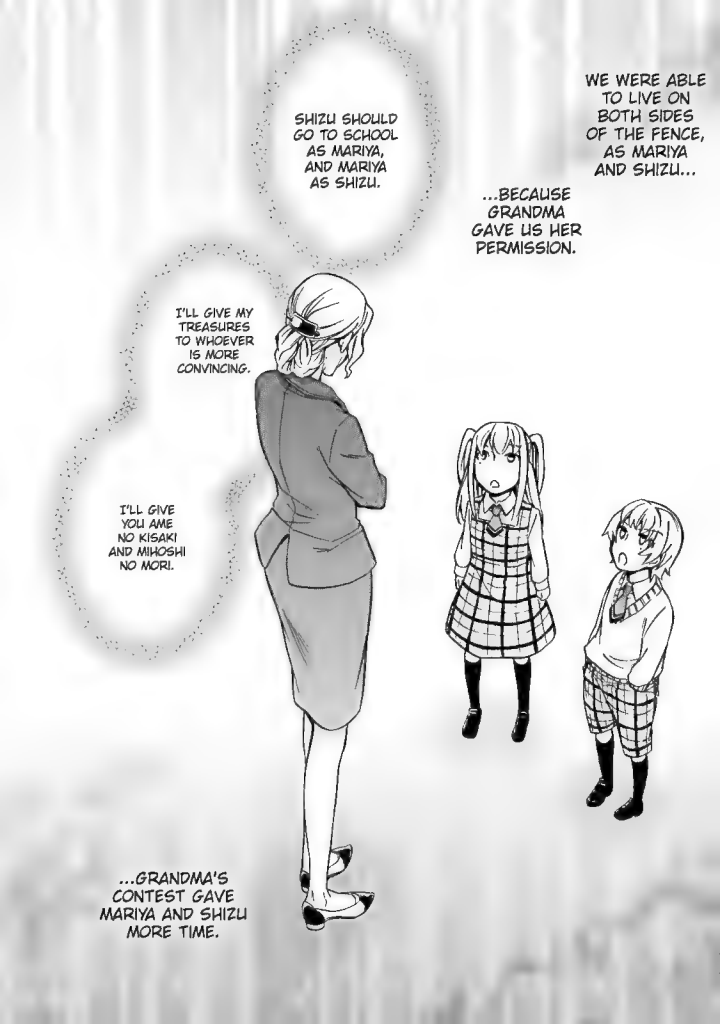
GOODBYE, MY TREASURES.
I PRAY THAT YOU TWO TOGETHER WILL TAKE FIRST PLACE.

BOTH SHIZU AND MARIYA...
...AND...

...MM. COMING TO THE DECISION TOGETHER. VERY GOOD.

MATSURIKA. RINDOU.
CAN I TRUST YOU TO WATCH OVER MY GRAND-CHILDREN?
YES, MADAM.
WE'LL SEE TO THEM.

WHEN WE WERE TOLD ABOUT GRANDMA'S DEATH...
IT FELT LIKE WE LEFT OUR BODIES, AND WERE FLOATING IN THE AIR.
TAP


WE WERE ABLE TO LIVE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE, AS MARIYA AND SHIZU...
...BECAUSE GRANDMA GAVE US HER PERMISSION.
SHIZU SHOULD GO TO SCHOOL AS MARIYA, AND MARIYA AS SHIZU.
I'LL GIVE MY TREASURES TO WHOEVER IS MORE CONVINCING.
I'LL GIVE YOU AME NO KISAKI AND MIHOSHI NO MORI.
...GRANDMA'S CONTEST GAVE MARIYA AND SHIZU MORE TIME.

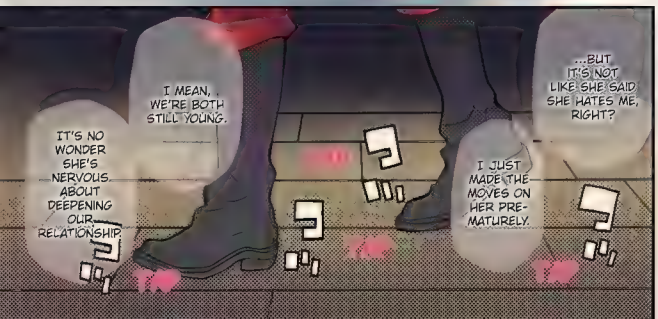
I PRAY THAT YOU TWO TOGETHER WILL TAKE FIRST PLACE.
I THOUGHT THE WORDING WAS AWFULLY STRANGE, SO I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT.
THE LAST THING SHE SAID...
WHAT IS IT?
NII-SAMA?
TO BE KIDS.
MORE TIME TO PLAY OUR GAME!
"WITH LOVE."
THAT'S HER MESSAGE?
Hand cream
Trump
Ink bottle
Wallet
Loupe
Orgel
Vanity bag
Eye drops
IF YOU PUT THE TRINKETS FROM THE ADVENT CALENDAR IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER...
AND LINE UP THE THINGS THE BOTH OF US GOT, AND TAKING THE FIRST LETTER IN EACH NOUN...
THAT'S STUPID HARD TO FIGURE OUT, AND TOTALLY FORCED...
WHAT'S WITH THAT?

...SHIZU-SAN WOULDN'T EVEN LET ME ASK HER OUT...

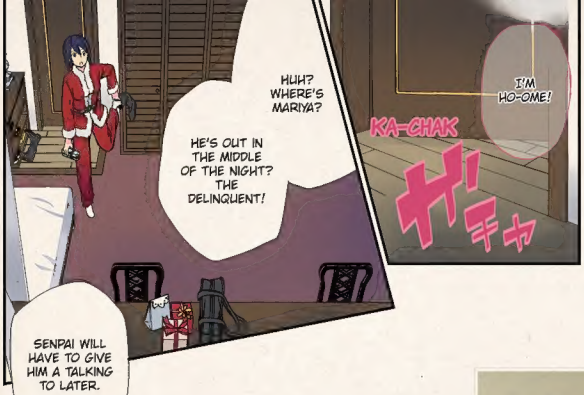
AH...!
I'M SORRY!
SHE LOOKED SO DESPERATE...
DID SHE WANT TO GET AWAY FROM ME THAT BADLY?
ふわ
FLOAT
DID I...
...GET SHOT DOWN?

A WHITE CHRISTMAS.
THINK IT'LL STICK?
SNOW...
WHAT ARE YOU, A NASTY ADULT?
I'LL PUT ROCKS IN MY SNOWBALLS.
WHAT ARE YOU, A KID?
IF IT DOES PILE UP, LET'S HAVE A SNOW FIGHT.
YOU SHUT UP.
I'LL TAKE A ROCKET LAUNCHER AND...

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!


IT'S NO WONDER SHE'S NERVOUS ABOUT DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP.
I MEAN, WE'RE BOTH STILL YOUNG.
I JUST MADE THE MOVES ON HER PREMATURELY.
...BUT IT'S NOT LIKE SHE SAID SHE HATES ME, RIGHT?

...AND KINDER!
EXPERIENCING SADNESS IS WHAT MAKES US STRONGER...
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MAKING LOTS AND LOTS OF MISSED CONNECTIONS OVER AND OVER, YOU KNOW?


I'M HO-OME!
KA-CHAK
ガチャ
HUH? WHERE'S MARIYA?
HE'S OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT? THE DELINQUENT!
SENPAI WILL HAVE TO GIVE HIM A TALKING TO LATER.

MY JOURNEY TO FIND MY ONE TRUE LOVE HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN.

HERE...

...AT AME NO KISAKI.

MARIA†HOLIC END

MARIA HOLIC
Volume 14

KADOKAWA MANGA

Story and Art by
Minari Endou

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KADOKAWA CORPORATION
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